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ABSTRACT

This report describes the Eurydice European information network on education systems. Started in 1980, Eurydice has grown to meet the needs of Europe's constantly evolving educational needs as it produces and dispenses reliable information that supports thinking and discussion about education within the European Community. Contents include discussion of Eurydice's expertise regarding informing policymaking and public debate, action on behalf of many different policymakers, observing the education systems of 11 countries, developing a special kind of knowledge whose authority is based on academic principles, making the most of its output, and cooperation with other partners. Other topics include how Eurydice as a European unit adjusted to the needs of close cooperation with national units, how it started as a documentary information network, its move toward using indicators and comparative analysis, and how it extended its activity to pre-accession countries. Its various dimensions, roles, and responsibilities are illustrated, along with ideas and plans for the future. The report concludes with two appendices (annexes) containing national unit views of the Eurydice Network and a list of Eurydice publications. (Contains 30 references.) (RT)

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Eurydice

The information network on education in Europe

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Twenty years promoting better understanding of education systems

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Education and culture
Socrates
Eurydice
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Eurydice,
the information network on education in Europe

20 years promoting better understanding of education systems

'It is precisely the creative opposition between the diversity of national systems and the growing similarity of our problems that provides one of the main raisons d'être of European cooperation'

Jacques Delors (¹)

(¹) *Le Magazine*, summer 1994 – No 2, European Commission Task Force: Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth.

Improving our knowledge of each other's education systems in order to enhance their quality is one of the central aims of European cooperation in education. It is an essential condition for coordinating our efforts more effectively when confronted with the often similar challenges facing those systems. Furthermore, the recent Lisbon summit highlighted the crucial role of education and training today in achieving a European economy that would be competitive on the world stage but with a concern, nevertheless, for social cohesion. As the European Commissioner for Education and Culture, I am convinced that these two areas, besides generating growth and innovation, are also the key to establishing real European citizenship.

For 20 years, the Eurydice Network has helped to boost understanding of education policies and systems in Europe while fully acknowledging the many ways in which they differ. Thanks to a close and original form of joint effort involving the Commission and the Member States, Eurydice fuels discussion and debate as a result of its work on indicators, comparative and contextual analyses, surveys and mongraphs, as well as through its databases. It is therefore a pleasure for me to pay tribute to the 20 years' existence of this important vehicle for cooperation and to express my very best wishes for its future success.

European cooperation has recently secured the resources it needs to embark on significant further growth. A new framework for cooperation is taking shape which will create a demand for comparative analyses and indicators. The experience developed in this area by the Eurydice Network, as well as its unwavering grasp of the kind of information that enlightened policy-making and public debate require, have made it an invaluable partner we cannot do without.

Open to the pre-accession countries, Eurydice is also contributing to the development of a 'European House of Education'. Its activity will unquestionably continue to be a source of inspiration as we adapt European education systems to the demands of this 'People's Europe' which will be responsive to the knowledge and technologies underpinning it and which we wholeheartedly wish to achieve.

Viviane Reding
Commissioner
Education and Culture

In 1976, at the initiative of the European Commission, the Council of education ministers adopted the first action programme (¹) in the field of education at European level. In order to reinforce the quality of this cooperation, the Commission at once proposed the setting up of a European information network on education systems. Eurydice accordingly came into being in 1980 in the form of a network which has since continued to develop, consolidate its identity and expand so that now, 20 years later, it has become the one education information network really worthy of this name at European level.

The Commission has always believed that, in order to encourage the exchange and production of reliable information among the Member States, it is vital to work within a network at European level and to support thinking and discussion about education within the Community. Such information is indeed crucial to sound mutual understanding between all those involved in European cooperation and the world of education more generally, whether as policy-makers, teachers, school heads, researchers or students. For this reason, the Commission considered that, alongside the National Units set up by each participating country, it was desirable to provide for the development of a European Unit that would be fully involved in stimulating the Network and ensuring that it maintained a high profile, by publishing a wide range of information products corresponding to the collective output of all its Members.

Of course, over the last 20 years, information requirements have evolved enormously both qualitatively and quantitatively, given the pressure exerted by ever closer and more intensive European cooperation between a growing number of European countries. The information produced has had to expand in variety and scope to cover the steadily increasing number of subjects of common interest, besides becoming more comparative so that similarities between education systems as well as common aspects of their development can be more readily understood and appreciated. It has also had to become more communicable and, by the same token, accessible to as many people as possible. With impetus provided by the European Commission, the Network proved capable from the start of the 1990s of anticipating these new requirements and preparing actively for a radical shift in emphasis. Its varied comparative analyses and joint work with Eurostat on indicators in education have attracted considerable interest at all levels and will continue to influence the activity of the Network into the foreseeable future.

As the Network celebrates its 20 years of existence, the European Commission today wishes to pay tribute to this tremendous capacity of Eurydice to adapt to constantly changing information requirements. It is an asset on which many demands will be made in the months and years ahead. The conclusions of the Lisbon summit in March 2000 unquestionably injected fresh momentum into European cooperation in education. The kind of support that their implementation will require is confirmation of just how relevant the fresh emphasis characterizing the work of Eurydice for some years has been. For the European Commission, the real challenge now is to consolidate and develop this achievement in anchoring Eurydice more firmly still to the novel concerns of European cooperation in education, especially in relation to the development of lifelong education.

Domenico Lenarduzzi
Deputy Director-General
Directorate-General for Education and Culture

(¹) Resolution of the Council and of the Ministers of Education meeting within the Council of 9 February 1976 comprising an action programme in the field of education (OJ C 38 of 19.02.1976).

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The European dimension of the Eurydice Network

The incorporation of 'education' into the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht was a watershed in Community cooperation in this field. Since then, cooperation has grown steadily closer, highlighting the ever increasing need for readily comparable information on national education systems. As a Network with a strong initial focus on documentary information, Eurydice very rapidly responded to this demand. From the start of the 1990s, following the lead given by the European Commission, the Network began to analyse systems and the way they developed so that its information output would be more in keeping with demand.

This activity has since steadily increased in scope as the Network has completed a varied range of comparative studies on topics of common interest, not to mention the first EU report on education indicators which was produced in 1994. Such a marked shift in the emphasis of its activity is to the credit of the entire Network, which has shown itself to be flexible and capable of responding to the tough and complex challenge that the comparative analysis of European education systems represents. In accomplishing such a change, Eurydice has irreversibly identified its activity with a European perspective and approach.

The impetus provided by the Network's European Unit

While each Member of the Network takes an active part in developing the European dimension of Eurydice, the European Unit has a special responsibility in this respect. Set up by the Commission, the Unit stimulates and coordinates the activities of the entire Network, injecting it with the impetus it needs. This highly specific contribution has grown over the years to keep pace with the increasingly close Community cooperation in education which forms the backdrop to Network activity.

Here, indeed, is the point in the Network at which the country-specific information gathered from each Unit is converted into information of European nature and significance. From the analytical standpoint, the European Unit is both an observatory and laboratory, and it closely interacts with all members of the Network in undertaking its meticulous examination of information from national sources. This material submitted in different languages may often correspond to hundreds or even thousands of pages of text, given the number of countries concerned. Step by step, the Unit builds up the comparative analysis of systems, constantly seeking to ensure that cross-country similarities or common features, no less than specifically national characteristics, get the full attention they deserve.

This work further involves devising and validating with members of the Network the common definitions and standardized data-gathering questionnaires that are an important basis for the subsequent preparation of any comparative information material produced by Eurydice. The European Unit is also responsible for designing Network databases in accordance with a common structure to reflect a comparative dimension that is no less significant than that of the studies.

Besides these responsibilities related to the Network as such, the closeness of the European Unit to the European Commission leads it to play an important part in ensuring that the Network and its activity become more widely known in appropriate circles at Community and international levels.

A European dimension conveyed by the whole Network

Of course, the work of the European Unit assumes its full significance only with the close involvement in it of the entire Network. The interest and value of the analyses carried out by the Unit are regularly enhanced by the re-reading and comments of the National Units and the various national experts concerned. Indeed, the comparative analysis of education as practised in some 30 countries is so complex that this collective re-reading is essential to the quality of every finished product, as well as the reliability of the information processed from national sources. It also results in appropriation of the comparative approach by the Network as a whole, with each of its members constantly involved in the development of information products that ultimately become a collectively shared resource. The European Unit and all the National Units are thus bound together by a very strong relationship rooted in essential mutual confidence and understanding. As a result of this collective activity based on common methods and a joint working programme, Eurydice has been able to consolidate its identity as an effective Network at European level. Indeed, it owes its strength and originality to the common sense of purpose which derives from this identity, along with the development of a very real 'Network culture'.

In addition to this collective effort and its results at Community level, the national impact of the Network should also be emphasized. While, as an integral part of the Socrates Programme, the Network seeks primarily to service European cooperation, it also takes an active part in it. Through the involvement of their staff in Eurydice activities, the ministries of education in each country cooperate closely amongst themselves. Furthermore, their very real contribution to the development of comparative European information on education systems is leading them to become increasingly aware of a European dimension in education, and to consider their own national situation in relation to that of other countries.

Eurydice can therefore justifiably take pride in the achievements of its first 20 years. It now offers Community cooperation in education and the world of education in general a well-established source of regularly updated information on the diversity of education systems in Europe. The wide variety of indicators and comparative studies with which it has been able to support Community debate and thinking have made a vital contribution to the development of high-quality cooperation. Furthermore, during the last 20 years, the activity of the Network has undergone very considerable geographical expansion. This capacity to take account of fresh educational contexts and the practical issues associated with them should also be regarded as a notable accomplishment. In the light of these major achievements, Eurydice is fully equipped to give its continued active support to European cooperation in education, as well as its further development.

The history of the Network covering the last two decades is thus a very rich one. Based on the collective memory of all who have been involved, it may nevertheless fade as time goes by. For this reason, the European Unit wished to produce a publication which would record specifically what has been achieved in 20 years of joint effort. The account is not exhaustive, since it could never do justice to the many rich and varied contributions made to the growth of the Network at all levels from the outset. Its aim is to focus on how the Network has developed, to highlight original aspects of its present expertise and to anticipate the many highly absorbing challenges awaiting it as European cooperation remains constantly on the move.

Luce Pépin
Head of the Eurydice European Unit

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Eurydice expertise

Informing policy-making and public debate

Eurydice is committed, first and foremost, to offering policy-makers and all those involved in the provision of education with information and analyses geared to their needs.

The information network on education in Europe, **Eurydice** is one of the strategic mechanisms established by the European Commission and Member States, and has been working for 20 years to boost cooperation, by improving understanding of systems and policies. Since 1995, **Eurydice** has also been an integral part of Socrates, the Community action programme in education. By highlighting the many differences between education systems as well as their common features, the work of **Eurydice** is conducive to the transparency of those systems. Its activity also contributes, directly or indirectly, to attempts to improve national and European education policies. Given the major responsibilities now attributed to education, not to mention the debate surrounding it everywhere in Europe and the impact on it of ongoing and future reform, the challenge facing **Eurydice** is enormous.

Decision No 253/2000/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 January 2000 establishing the second phase of the Community action programme in the field of education 'Socrates'.
OJ L 28, 03.02.2000, p. 1-15 (extract)

'...

Action 6: Observation and Innovation

This action contributes to improving the quality and transparency of education systems and furthering the process of educational innovation in Europe through the exchange of information and experience, the identification of good practice, the comparative analysis of systems and policies in this field, and the discussion and analysis of matters of common educational policy interest to be determined by the Council.

Action 6.1: Observation of education systems, policies and innovation

1. Making optimal use of existing structures wherever possible, this action consists of the following:

(a) collection of descriptive and statistical data, and comparative analysis of educational systems and policies in the Member States;
(b) development of methods for evaluating the quality of education, including the development of appropriate criteria and indicators;
(c) development and updating of databases and other information resources on innovatory experiments;
(d) dissemination of experience resulting from relevant activities supported at Community and Member State level;
(e) facilitation of the recognition of diplomas, qualifications and periods of learning at all educational levels in other Member States.

2. To this end, Community financial assistance may be awarded for:

*a) the information network on education in Europe, '**Eurydice**', comprising the European Unit set up by the Commission and units set up by the Member States to enable it to make a full contribution to the implementation of this action. The network will in particular be called upon to collect and exchange information on education systems and policies, to develop data bases, to produce comparative studies and to draw up indicators. **Eurydice** will seek, when necessary, relevant support from external experts.*

...'

Reliable relevant information is now unquestionably essential to policy-making. Decision-makers themselves are not bound by the knowledge they acquire. The expertise made available to them should do no more than enlighten their decisions. Yet it is no longer conceivable that they should take those decisions without having first explored every possible means of becoming better informed about circumstances in other countries just as much as in their own. The facts have to be gathered, evaluated, classified and assessed and, ideally, interpreted with due regard for their context. The world of education at both national and European levels is also subject to this constant search for fully informed decision-making.

In order to develop mutual knowledge and understanding of systems and policies, the expertise accumulated and made available has to be viewed in terms of the following aspects:

- the gathering of basic data;
- the provision of information whenever required on recent trends;
- comparison of systems, actions and policies by placing them in their context;
- consideration, where appropriate, of topical aspects of debate or reforms with respect to long-term trends;
- the preparation of indicators and monitoring of changes in them;
- contributing to forward-looking and strategic analysis;
- the collection and consolidation of research findings;
- the identification of available information resources.

Eurydice is fully engaged in all these activities. While its output is primarily for use by national, regional, local or European policy-makers, it also inevitably fuels public debate. This contribution is becoming all the more significant in that the new information technologies enable the work of **Eurydice** to be made even more widely available.

Who, in principle, are the main recipients of the knowledge and expertise which inform policy-making and public debate? What requirements do the knowledge and expertise have to satisfy? What field(s) do they cover? How are they developed and consolidated, and what form do they have to take?

Action on behalf of many different policy-makers

Eurydice is a network made up of National Units established by ministries of education and a European Unit set up by the European Commission. It produces information geared primarily to the needs of the following:

- ministerial advisers, administrators, and other staff, all of whom need a sound grasp of current procedures and initiatives, including information relating to practice in the various European countries;

Within the ministries, information from Eurydice is intended primarily for:

- ministerial secretariats and advisory staff;
- staff responsible for implementing the policies adopted;
- European and international relations divisions;
- departments for research and forward planning.

Such information is also directed at all bodies close to the ministries or geographically decentralized departments of the latter.

- senior European Commission staff responsible for devising and implementing educational policies and programmes, as well as members of other Community institutions concerned with these matters and, in particular, the European Parliament.

Education systems are tending to become more decentralized in many European countries. In some of them, this trend has already fully materialized. Depending on the national context and the structure of the system concerned, local and regional politicians and administrators, school heads and inspectors, trade unions, and teacher and parent associations have also become involved in decision-making. They too are thus potential users of the information made available by **Eurydice**.

Whether they are responsible for national, regional, local or European matters, all those who conduct or contribute to policy-making are regularly called upon to consider many different issues. They possess only limited resources, yet remain under the constant gaze of the media and general public. Increasingly intensive European cooperation is leading them to examine more closely the nature and consequences of initiatives taken elsewhere. They therefore require specialized forms of knowledge and analysis on the issues concerned, which are prepared and made available specifically for them. The rationale of a network such as **Eurydice** consists in responding to this need.

The position of the National Units in the Network vis-à-vis their corresponding ministries of education, along with the close cooperation between the European Unit and the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission, result in a very privileged partnership with policy-makers. This close relationship enables

The role of the Education Committee

The proactive nature of the Network in relation to the needs of policy-makers is also ensured via regular contact with the Education Committee. Operating within the framework of the Council, this Committee is made up of representatives of the Ministries of Education and the European Commission. It is chaired every six months by the country holding the presidency of the Council during the same period.

Its main task is to prepare the business of the Council and Education Ministers and, working closely with the Commission, ensure that their decisions are followed up. Similarly, it prepares for consideration the various educational issues to be included on the agenda of the programmes of each presidency. At the request of the presidency, it also organizes meetings of senior officials responsible for education policies, with a view to discussing problems common to the Member States.

While the annual working programme of the Network is subject to formal approval by the Socrates Committee, the Education Committee is informed in detail about its aims and implementation. Work and discussion in the Education Committee drive the activities of the Network, as a result of which the Committee is a privileged user of **Eurydice** output. Members of the Committee also play an important and valuable part in ensuring that due weight is attached to the work of **Eurydice** in the Council of education ministers.

Eurydice to take account of their particular requirements both in the initial stages of its work, when deciding which particular topics should be addressed, and much later, when seeking the views of those concerned as to the usefulness of the information made available to them.

Although they are not the frontline recipients of the publications and other material produced by **Eurydice**, many other groups also find the Network's products valuable sources of information. Such groups include teachers, educational researchers (in particular those involved in comparative education), teacher training institutes, information resource centres, and all those professionally involved in mobility and exchange initiatives with other countries.

Some examples of how Eurydice output has been used in (1) ...
Austria

In autumn 2000, the Austrian government plans to introduce a registration fee (of 10.000 Austrian schillings) for students in higher education. In the public debate on this issue, the Unit was contacted by Austrian television which was looking for a list of registration fees in force in Europe. The relevant information could be provided thanks to *Key Topics, Volume 1, Financial support for students in higher education in Europe. Trends and debates.*

... Germany

The **Eurydice** survey on teacher training (1995) provided the background information required for an assessment of foreign teaching qualifications in integrating EEC Directive 89/48 (2) into *Länder* laws for the teaching profession.
The **Eurydice** study *Secondary education: structures, organisation and administration*, and particularly the data on the number of lessons and compulsory subjects at secondary level in other European countries, were relevant to a proposed reduction from 13 to 12 years in the schooling required to attain the general higher education entrance qualification. This is an option now offered in several *Länder* and is the subject of school experiments in others.

... Italy

To accompany the reform of the upper-secondary-school final examination in Italy, two *Quaderni di Eurydice* were published, both in paper and electronic format; for wider distribution, they were made available on the BDP web site:

1) *Prove di esame di fine studi secondari superiori in Europa. Area umanistica.*
2) *Prove di esame di fine studi secondari superiori in Europa. Area scientifica.*

In 1999/2000, the Ministry of Education used **Eurydice** material to tackle one of the thorniest issues in Italy, namely teachers' career advancement and service conditions.

Eurydice is to have a sources and products area at the international seminar 'Curriculum Standards Competencies', to be hosted by BDP in Florence in November 2000. This initiative targets the personnel from the Italian Ministry of Education engaged in revising the curriculum of basic compulsory education and secondary education, following the reform of school cycles. The event will also be attended by representatives of the peripheral administration of education, teachers' professional organisations, political forces and representatives of trade unions. Some of the speakers were chosen in collaboration with other **Eurydice** national units.

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(1) The reader will find other examples in Annex 1: *National Unit views of the Network.*

(2) Council Directive of 21 December 1988 on a general system for the recognition of higher education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years duration (89/48/EEC).

... the United Kingdom

Analysis of the subjects of requests for information on an ad hoc basis in recent years shows that the Unit for England, Wales and Northern Ireland has provided a significant input into many of the major areas of policy reform. Recent examples include teachers' pay and conditions of service and student financial arrangements. The Unit also provided information for the Dearing Report, *The National Curriculum and its Assessment* (1994).

The Scottish Unit was able to provide **Eurydice** information that was especially apropos. In July 1999, the Scottish Executive set up the Independent Committee of Enquiry into Student Finance. The officials attached to the committee were required to prepare a range of background papers at short notice. These included one describing the situation and current developments in other European countries. The **Eurydice** Network had recently produced *Key topics in education: Financial support for students in higher education in Europe*, and this addressed many of their needs. Similarly, in September 1999, the Executive set up an Independent Committee of Inquiry into Professional Conditions of Service for Teachers. Again the officials concerned had to prepare background information for the committee members and in this case *Key data on education in Europe* proved to be a very useful source of information.

... Cyprus

In June 1999, the Standing Committee for the Promotion of Literacy and for Combating School Failure, an advisory body to the Minister of Education and Culture, formally presented a document which outlined the situation in Europe and in Cyprus regarding school failure and then proceeded to suggest specific measures to face this challenge in the Cypriot context. The committee drew heavily on the **Eurydice** document *Measures to combat school failure: A challenge for the construction of Europe*.

Structures of the education, initial training and adult education systems in Europe has been distributed to trainers of prospective secondary school teachers at the Cyprus Pedagogical Institute. The instructors find these sources especially useful when they deal with a course component focusing on the comparison of selected education systems in Europe and the U.S.

... Romania

Key data on education in Europe was an important element in designing a new information system for educational management at pre-university level.

... and Slovenia

The Republic of Slovenia's National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis* by the end of 2000, approved by the government in November 1999, assessed two areas in which Slovenia was lagging behind other developed countries: the percentage of the population enrolled in post-secondary education and equality of women in employment. When the country's accession strategy in the field of human resources was drafted in August 2000, it was found that this assessment was based on data that were not internationally comparable; the figures were then checked against **Eurydice** indicators given in *Key data on education in Europe - 1999/2000* and corrected. Enrolment in post-secondary education proved to be comparable with that of other European countries, and the unemployment rate for women with academic degrees is only slightly lower than that for their male colleagues.

Observing the education systems of 31 countries

Topics covered

Any issue related to educational policies (structures, reforms and trends) or to subjects associated with Community cooperation in education is liable to be considered by **Eurydice**.

Eurydice's work includes not only the study of the overall organization of education systems, but also focuses on more specific aspects, such as the structure and functioning of particular courses.

All levels of education considered as a whole or, in appropriate cases, individually, may be subjects for analysis. The potential focus extends from pre-primary to higher education and also naturally includes teacher training.

However, the terms of reference of education, as strictly defined, are becoming more flexible and amenable to fresh forms of activity. Adult education and efforts to develop lifelong learning are two cases in point since, in addition to the formal education system, they also involve continuing education and so-called 'informal' learning. Aware of the increasing influence in particular of education on training and vice versa, **Eurydice** is cooperating with other partners in these novel areas to mobilize all relevant expertise and contribute as effectively as possible to overall analysis of them.

Examples of topics covered by Eurydice

Besides preparing basic general information on education systems, the Network has, in the last three years, carried out work on the following topics:
- foreign language teaching in schools,
- the funding of schools,
- the educational institutions of 29 countries,
- the new information and communication technologies in education,
- teaching staff,
- private education and the role of the public authorities,
- reforms in higher education since 1980,
- the contribution of education systems to lifelong learning,
- examinations, diplomas and titles in 24 countries,
- initial teaching of reading (for a study published by the European Commission),
- financial support for students in higher education,
- forward planning in education,
- reforms in compulsory education from 1984 to 1994.

Irrespective of the topic considered, most of the work carried out by **Eurydice** is consistent with an approach characteristic of comparative education. By nature interdisciplinary in its dependence on the social sciences, comparative education studies educational phenomena and developments in their social, political, economic and cultural contexts. The historical approach is also pursued to enhance understanding of trends. In drawing attention both to similarities and differences, comparative education aims to improve insight into the special features of systems and the interdependent relations between the factors which give rise to them. Its ultimate aim is to enlighten policy-making in the interests of better education.

Geographical coverage

Eurydice covers the education systems of the 15 Member States of the European Union and the three countries of the European Economic Area (EEA), and now extends to the systems of the pre-accession countries as they become increasingly involved in the Socrates Programme.

Countries covered by the Eurydice Network

The Member States of the European Union: Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria, Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

The EEA (European Economic Area) countries: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway.

Countries which have applied to join the European Union and are included in its pre-accession strategy: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia and Cyprus. At the time of writing, discussions are in hand with a view to the inclusion in the Network of Malta and Turkey, both of which are in the process of becoming involved in the Socrates Programme.

All these countries now contribute to most studies initiated by the Network. The geographical coverage of work carried out before the pre-accession countries joined it, or at the time that they did so, has in certain cases been broadened in accordance with priorities and available resources. New countries are above all asked to supply a detailed description of their education systems suitable for comparative purposes.

Developing a special kind of knowledge whose authority is based on academic principles

The nature and scope of the information required by those who are responsible for the management and administration of education vary enormously, depending on their specific position and responsibilities, as well as on their status and immediate or long-term aims.

Supplying information appropriate to policy-making and public debate is a task that is complex and demanding at national level and, even more so, at European level. The processes that lead to policy-making vary considerably as do the education systems themselves. This diversity is the product of historical, political and cultural factors that have shaped national systems. At the same time, it represents a rich source of experience and practices capable of fuelling mutual inspiration and European cooperation.

If work by **Eurydice** is to provide real support to those for whom it is carried out, therefore, it has to take account of the fact that it will be used in many different ways. It also has to be alive to the particular circumstances under which the same issue will arise in different systems. The field covered by each study must therefore be set within firm limits but sufficiently comprehensive to provide for consideration of all potential questions liable to arise from the concerns of the Commission or the Member States.

The working method of the Network

The **Eurydice** Network has become an authoritative reference source as a result of its working methodology aimed at producing high quality reliable studies.

In the first instance, the European Unit and a selected group of National Units establish the framework for analysis, along with the factors to be examined and the way information is to be gathered. At this stage, the aim is to determine the precise scope of the study concerned, the refinements needed to secure a sound comparative dimension, and the terms in which the issue in hand may be expressed across all countries examined in the survey. The working hypotheses drawn up in this way together, where appropriate, with the information-gathering questionnaire prepared by the European Unit are tested by the above-mentioned group of Units. Information is then gathered at the source by all National Units. Next, the European Unit:

- analyses the data;
- recontacts National Units in order to clarify the data where necessary;
- draws attention to common points, special characteristics and general tendencies;
- drafts the comparative analyses, and secures their formal approval by the National Units.

The National Units also produce descriptions of the systems in their countries, which are often published to lend further weight to the comparative analyses undertaken by the European Unit.

In order to carry out these studies, the Network relies on the collaboration of independent experts, thereby furthering relations between those who conduct research into education and education ministries.

Encouraging transparency and the exchange of information and experience also implies the need to identify a common language and methods for describing different systems in a meaningful way, enabling them to be understood by those who regularly deal with other situations. **Eurydice** attaches great importance to this comprehensive 'laying bare' of the elements comprising systems. All its comparative studies are subjected to this initial process on which the validity of subsequent comparisons largely depends. Indeed, specific initiatives (in the form of glossaries, basic national descriptions, etc.) focus exclusively on this dimension of the work carried out.

The activity of the Network is based on data gathered within each Ministry. The location of National Units within (or very close to) the Ministries gives them privileged access to official sources. The knowledge accumulated in this way cannot be fully identified with academic learning in the normal sense. The information sources used are generally more limited than those on which the academic world relies for its output. For example, **Eurydice** does not carry out field surveys. On the other hand, the discipline and principles underlying the production of these special analyses, which have to cover all aspects of issues confronting policy-makers, are those from which academic research derives its authority. The approach involved in preparing studies (arriving at fully consistent definitions and devising data-gathering questionnaires), along with the kind of analysis undertaken (creating and formulating models and hypotheses, etc.) are also those of the academic research worker.

All analyses carried out by **Eurydice** are conducted in accordance with the foregoing principles, and they constitute the core of its knowledge and expertise.

National Units within the Network also quite regularly request information on an ad hoc basis from one or more other Units. Indeed, on occasions, an urgent request for information from a national official on an exceptionally specific matter cannot be answered by referring to the vast pool of descriptive data and comparative analyses built up over the years. Questions of this kind are handled within bilateral relations between the National Units.

Distinct and varied approaches

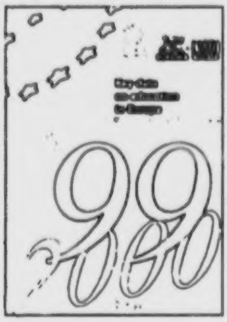
In order to meet the varied needs of its users, **Eurydice** prepares and publishes the following:

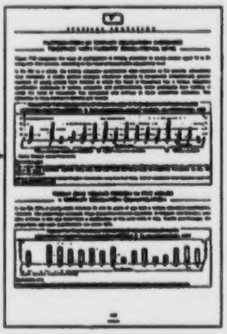
- readily comparable and regularly updated monographs on the organization of education systems;
- comparative studies on specific topics of Community interest;
- indicators on the different levels of education, from pre-primary to higher education.

Eurydice also makes available to its users *Eurybase*, a highly detailed database – the only one of its kind – on all education systems covered by the Network. Each system is described in accordance with the same pattern, in English and in its one or more national languages. The description is supplemented with an enumeration of relevant legislation, a list of institutions, a glossary and a bibliography. Devised by the European Unit, this database is a source of information used extensively both by members of the Network and outside it. The National Units draft and annually update their contribution to *Eurybase*.

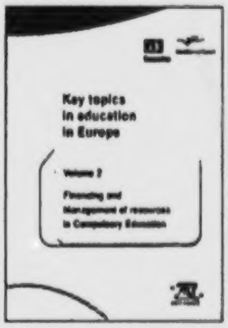
Each national entry contains the following sections: economic and political background; general organization of the education system and general administration of education; pre-primary education; primary education; secondary education; tertiary education; adult education; teachers and educational staff; assessment of the education system; special education; the European dimension in education.

Depending on their precise nature, the publications of the Network are grouped into separate series:





- ***Key data on education in Europe*** is a series published by the European Commission and produced in cooperation with Eurostat. Every two years, it provides an updated version of a range of general indicators relating to the organization and operation of the different levels of education systems in Europe.



Key topics
in education
in Europe

- ***Key topics in education in Europe*** is also a series published by the European Commission, which consists of comparative studies based on the thorough examination of a particular topic in a way that combines descriptive and contextual analysis with the use of indicators. These studies are also enriched by contributions from experts in each country from outside the Network, who are specialists in the subject under consideration.

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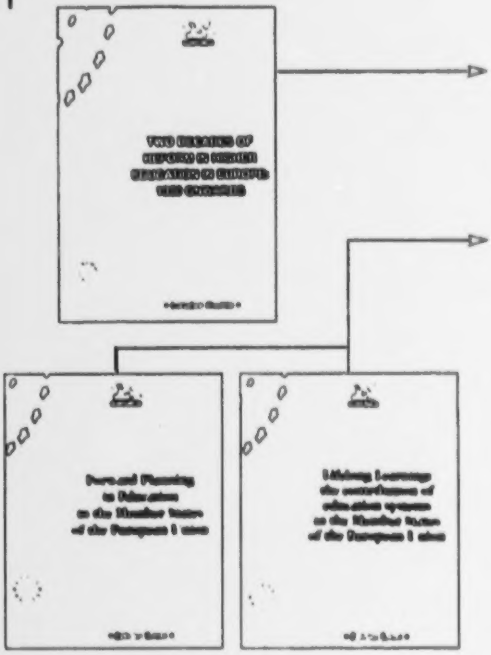
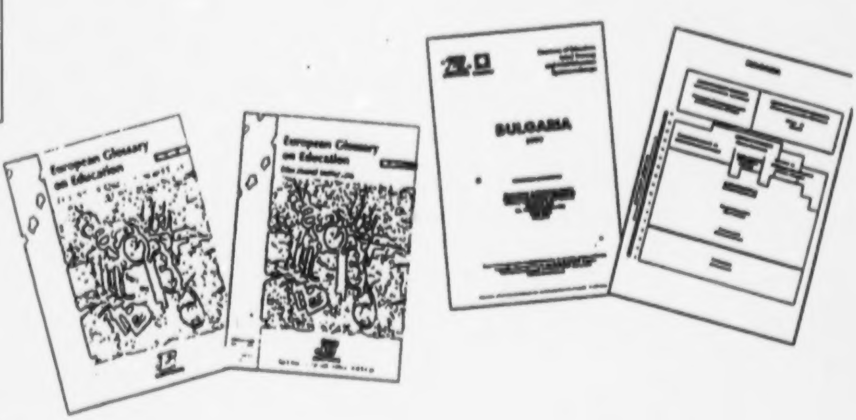
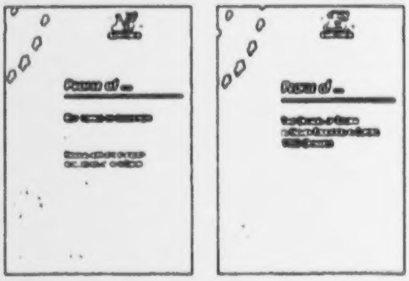


- The ***Eurydice Studies*** comprise analyses of specific topics of Community interest. They consist primarily of a comparative overview identifying the main trends at European level, and are generally accompanied by an account of the situation in each country, which is provided either in an annexe or on the **Eurydice** website.

- The ***Eurydice Surveys*** fuel political consideration of strategic issues on the agenda of European policy-makers. They take the form of short studies on topics viewed from a European perspective, which are illustrated by summaries of the situation in each of the countries concerned. Conducted over a period of a few months, unlike the other analyses undertaken over a longer period, these surveys are intended to enrich and inform discussion on education in each of the Council presidencies.

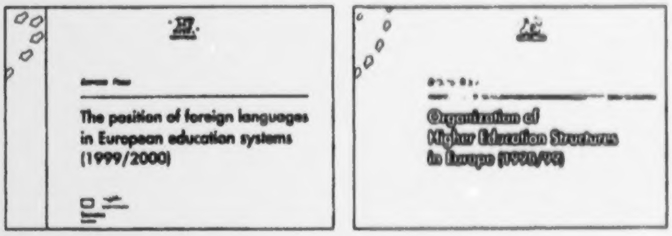
- ***Ready Reference*** is a series providing the basic tools to describe or define the fundamentals or concepts of education systems or the constituent parts of them.


European Glossary on Education
European Glossary on Education
BULGARIA



In order to satisfy an increasingly varied demand and ensure that its output is circulated as widely as possible, **Eurydice** also publishes three additional series to supplement the foregoing as follows:

- The ***Profile*** series which provides short overviews either of *Key topics in education in Europe* or the *Eurydice Studies.*



The position of foreign languages in European education systems (1999/2000)

Organization of Higher Education Structures in Europe (1998/99)

- ***Eurydice Focus*** which quickly provides a concise insight into a particular aspect of education systems. The raw material for this series is usually taken from more extensive studies already carried out by the Network, and is updated to keep pace with ongoing developments.

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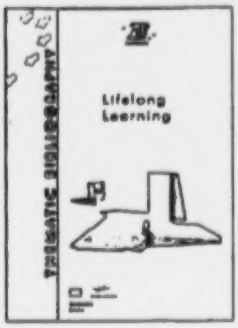
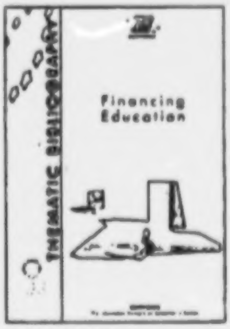




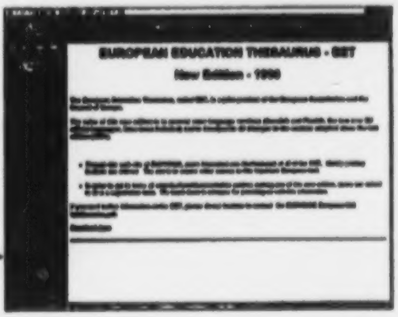
- The ***Thematic Bibliographies*** which provide the bibliographic references for literature with a European perspective on a given topic linked to a subject dealt with in *Key topics on education in Europe*, the *Studies* or the *Surveys*.

With the financial support of the European Commission, all these series are published in conventional printed paper form and may also be accessed in full on the **Eurydice** Internet website.

Access to some **Eurydice** publications may be secured only via the Internet:

- ***Eurybase***, which possesses a powerful search engine;
- the ***European Education Thesaurus***, a terminological tool in 11 languages developed by the Council of Europe and the European Commission;

The *European Education Thesaurus* (EET) is an information resource language intended to facilitate the recording of and search for information in databases on education in Europe. Covering the 11 official languages of the European Union, it consists of a set of terms linked to one another by hierarchical or associative relationships. The EET is the common language of those who use and administer national and international information resource systems in and beyond the European Union. Other linguistic versions of the EET have been developed independently in the meantime, in Croatian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Slovene and Turkish.



EUROPEAN EDUCATION THESAURUS - EET

- certain monographs which are not paper printed, either because of the great quantity of information they contain (as in the case of ***Structures of the education and initial and adult training systems in Europe***), or so that they can be more easily consulted by users interested solely in one or two of the countries concerned (as in the case, for example, of very short summary sheets on each education system, or the national monographs that have formed the basis for the study on the teaching of foreign languages in schools).

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Making the most of Eurydice output

Eurydice invests considerable effort in enhancing the impact of its work, via a variety of different channels.

Special action by the Units in this respect is part of a logically consistent and structured approach developed for the entire Network, and Units also regularly exchange information on good practice among themselves.

Most of the National Units, as well as the European Unit, administer a regularly updated database on the representatives of their target groups and have formal arrangements for providing them with information. As a result, the latter systematically receive press releases accompanying new **Eurydice** publications, along with such publications themselves where appropriate.

Cooperation is encouraged between National Units and information outlets within ministries so that the work of **Eurydice** is featured in their magazines and newsletters, etc. Similar efforts are made to publicize its activity via the specialized press, academic periodicals and major national and European organizations active in the field of education (including teacher associations and trade unions, associations of parents, etc.).

Examples of cooperation with the press

Thanks to the **Greek** Unit's policy of actively promoting **Eurydice's** work in the press, numerous articles have been published in magazines and newspapers. New **Eurydice** publications are regularly reviewed in *To Bhma, To Vima, Ta Nea, Kathimerini, Eleftheros Typos, Eleftherotypia, Eleftheri Ora, Ethnos, Imerissia, Apogevmatini, Vradini, Augi, Eksousia, Adesmeytos Typos, I Chora* etc.

To keep the world of education informed about **Eurydice's** publications, the **Spanish** Unit has close links with the press, especially scientific journals. Recently it has written, or collaborated on, articles that have appeared in *Critica, Fuentes Estadisticas, Communidad Educatiua* and *Jara*.

The **Swedish** Unit keeps its target public regularly abreast of **Eurydice's** latest work, primarily through articles in the Education Ministry's information bulletins: *Ugglan*, distributed twice monthly within the Ministry and *Nyhetsbrev*, which appears five times a year and is sent to heads of schools, local authorities etc.

An integral part of the Socrates Programme, **Eurydice** makes the results of its analyses directly available to those involved in the Programme. For example, Network representatives regularly take part in meetings of educational decision-makers and school heads preparing for multilateral study visits under Arion, another component of Socrates.

Examples of promotional activities within the Socrates programme

The **Polish** Unit is particularly active and has participated in: a number of conferences for the coordinators of Erasmus; a Comenius programme for the teachers and other staff of teacher-training centres and coordinators of the programme; meetings organized for participants in ARION study visits; and seminars, like the one held in October 1999, on diploma recognition in higher education, organised by the Polish NARIC/ENIC.

Ongoing direct contact with those at national, federal, regional, local or European level who are responsible for determining and implementing educational policies, as well as with members of the Education Committee, is also of great importance in enhancing the impact of work by **Eurydice**.

Examples of activities with specific target groups

The **Finnish** Unit participates regularly in conferences and seminars where it is invited to present and distribute **Eurydice** publications. In September 2000, for example, the Unit took part in:

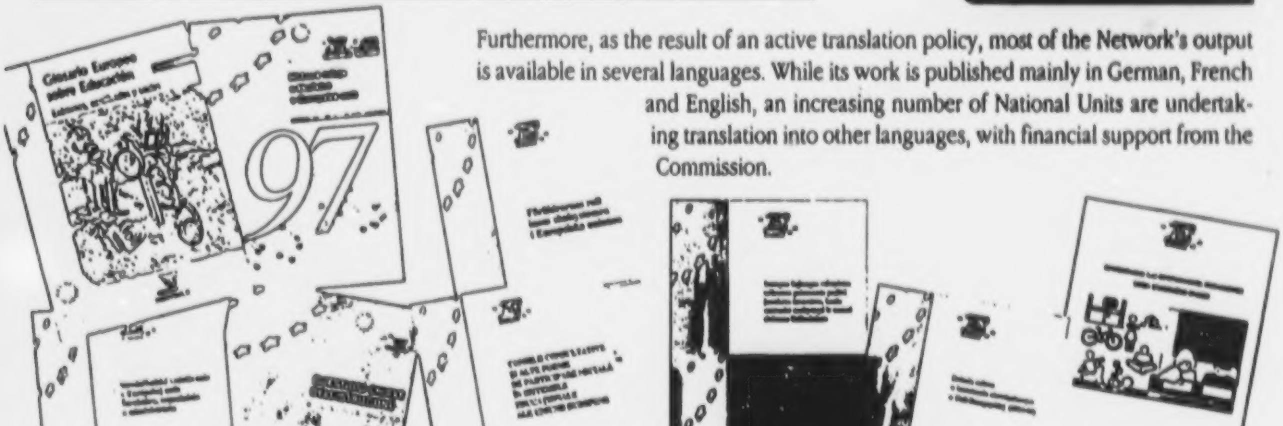
- a seminar bringing together some 200 teachers of international affairs from Finnish higher education establishments;
- a seminar on educational trends in Europe, at Hämeelinna, for some 40 international coordinators from polytechnic and vocational schools;
- a major international conference in Helsinki on adult education and lifelong learning.

In addition to its promotional activities vis-à-vis the specialised press (*Lidové Noviny, Aula, Zpravodaj Vyzkumneho Ustavu Odborného Skolstvy*, etc.), the **Czech** Unit disseminates **Eurydice** work by participating in international conferences such as a seminar on the White Book, *The Czech educational system within the European context*, and a conference on information and communication technologies, organised by the University of Ostrava in the autumn of 2000.

The **Eurydice** Internet website administered by the European Unit has also been the focus of increased attention and major developments. This website now enables the educational community in Europe and beyond to secure access to a rich structured source of information specially devised to help users understand and compare systems and policies (including those with which they may be unfamiliar).

In its 'Eurydice News' section, the **Eurydice** website also provides access to brief information on fresh developments in the education systems of countries in the Network, as well as on Community policy in the field of education. The whole website possesses an active search engine and, in addition, includes links to other websites on education.

Furthermore, as the result of an active translation policy, most of the Network's output is available in several languages. While its work is published mainly in German, French and English, an increasing number of National Units are undertaking translation into other languages, with financial support from the Commission.



Cooperation with other partners

Eurydice cooperates closely with several European or international organizations, as recommended in the Decision of the European Parliament and the Council on the Socrates Programme.

Key data on education in Europe is a publication resulting from a partnership between **Eurydice** and **Eurostat**, the Statistical Office of the European Communities. Since its central contribution to the first Commission report providing a comprehensive overview of education, which was published in 1995, **Eurydice** has been working increasingly closely with **Eurostat** to update and renew this broad spectrum of general indicators which appears every two years. Their cooperation also focuses on the development of macroeconomic indicators included in studies in the *Key topics in education* series. In addition, **Eurydice** is a member of the Task Force launched by **Eurostat** in the spring of 2000 to take stock of data available in the area of lifelong education and training, identify shortcomings in it, and make recommendations on the best way of remedying them.

As a result of the increasingly close association between education and training, **Eurydice** is also involved in an important and highly productive partnership with **Cedefop** (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training). Collaboration between them is based, above all, on constant exchanges of information in the course of specially organized meetings, as well as reciprocal participation in their normal regular meetings. It is also reflected in the joint publication of *Structures of the education and initial and adult training systems in Europe*. In addition, **Eurydice** is one of the partners of **Cedefop** in EASE (Education Advanced Search Europe), the European electronic gateway to resource centres in education and training. A common focus on the areas of lifelong learning and terminological issues is yet a further source of joint collaboration between **Cedefop** and **Eurydice** staff responsible for these matters.

European Training Foundation

Another partner of **Eurydice**, the **ETF** (European Training Foundation) based in Turin, is also involved in the publication of *Structures of the education and initial and adult training systems in Europe*, via its National Observatories in the countries of central and eastern Europe.

Finally, the **Eurydice** European Unit supports the Commission in the work it undertakes, as appropriate, with international organizations such as the **Council of Europe**, the **OECD** (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) and **Unesco** (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). Exchanges of information and publications are regularly organized between **Eurydice** and these partners.

A Network which has adjusted to the needs of cooperation

A forerunner of subsidiarity

In November 1971, the Conference of education ministers of Member States of the European Community acknowledged the need to initiate cooperation in the field of education. In order to determine the basis for cooperation, former Belgian Minister of Education Henri Janne was authorized in July 1972 to prepare a report. This report provided an initial outline of an action programme in education in 1973, just when membership of the European Community was expanding from six countries to nine, with the entry into it of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom. In March 1974, a communication from the Commission entitled 'Education in the European Community' was presented to the Council. The initial aims of Community action in education were to encourage the mobility of teachers, researchers and students, the education of children of migrant workers and the introduction of a European dimension into education.

Resolution of the ministers for education meeting within the Council, for the first time, on 6 June 1974 on cooperation in the field of education.
OJ C 98, 20.08.1974, p. 2 (extract)

'...

I. *Cooperation in education shall be based on the following principles:*
  - *the programme of cooperation initiated in the field of education, whilst reflecting the progressive harmonization of the economic and social policies in the Community, must be adapted to the specific objectives and requirements of this field,*
  - *on no account must education be regarded merely as a component of economic life,*
  - *educational cooperation must make allowance for the traditions of each country and the diversity of their respective educational policies and systems.*

Harmonization of these systems or policies cannot, therefore, be considered an end in itself.

II. *At the present stage, this cooperation will relate mainly to the following priority spheres of action: - better facilities for the education and training of nationals and the children of nationals of other Member States of the Communities and of non-member countries,*
  - *promotion of closer relations between educational systems in Europe,*
  - *compilation of up-to-date documentation and statistics on education,*
  - *increased cooperation between institutions of higher education,*
  - *improved possibilities for academic recognition of diplomas and periods of study,*
  - *encouragement of the freedom of movement and mobility of teachers, students and research workers, in particular by the removal of administrative and social obstacles to the free movement of such persons and by the improved teaching of foreign languages,*
  - *achievement of equal opportunity for free access to all forms of education.*

It is self-evident that any subject which it would appear necessary to study to attain the results sought in this sphere must be open to examination.

...'

In June 1974, the Council of Ministers adopted a resolution which identified a certain number of priorities for cooperation in education, entrusting their preparation to a special Education Committee made up of representatives of Member States and the Commission. This resolution was inspired by three principles that were to have a pro-

The first meeting, on **18 October 1974**, of the Education Committee comprising Member State and Commission representatives, with its secretariat provided by the Council.

found influence on subsequent cooperation, as follows:

- education should remain an autonomous area of responsibility, but coordinated interaction between education, training and employment systems should be improved;
- the diversity and particular character of the education systems of individual Member States should be fully respected; this principle drew a distinction between education and Community policy in other areas, since it effectively repudiated any attempt to harmonize the educational structures of the Member States, or to establish a single system of education or common curricula;
- Member States were free to decide how they implemented any aims that might be jointly formulated.

On the basis of the report prepared by the Education Committee, the first action programme in education was adopted on 9 February 1976. The programme was concerned to uphold the diversity of experience and from the outset disclaimed any attempt to make systems more similar. It sought, instead, to introduce mechanisms that would result in greater knowledge and understanding of educational policies and structures.

It was from this standpoint that the 9 February 1976 resolution of the Council and ministers for education emphasized how the exchange of information could be crucially instrumental to the development of Community policy and cooperation. The resolution firmly drew attention to the need to intensify and provide appropriate structures for circulating information on the various education systems. It also confirmed the intention to set up a network for this purpose.

Resolution of the Council and of the ministers for education meeting within the Council of 9 February 1976 comprising an action programme in the field of education.
OJ C 38, 19.02.1976, p. 1-5 (extract)
'....
IV. The Action programme is as follows:
...
8. It is necessary to increase and improve the circulation of information between those responsible for education and those receiving it at all levels.
9. To this end, an information network will be set up by appointing in each Member State a national information service on education in the Community. The organization of work at Community level will be studied once the appropriate national measures have been taken.
...'

Close interaction between National Units and a European Unit

The principle of establishing a European information network on education was formally adopted. The next step was to determine its aims, working methods and the conditions governing its implementation.

The Education Committee organized several meetings in the course of 1977, in order to identify the kinds of service which might be expected of such a network which was finally made responsible for supporting the cooperation programme by improving understanding of how the various education systems functioned.

The Commission undertook to set up a Central Unit to coordinate and stimulate the Network. The initial task of the Network was to work on behalf of policy-makers at national, Community, and (in certain instances) regional and local levels. A further responsibility – entrusted to the Central Unit – was to inform Commission officials about ongoing and future trends in education systems within the Community.

The aims of the Network were summed up as follows:

- to provide the Commission with an internal and external Community information service;
- to improve existing information mechanisms;
- to reply to questions on national systems from Units in the Network, by means of a continuous and dynamic flow of information on policies, trends and developments in education systems;
- to provide information on the features, structures and practices of education systems.

At its meeting in November 1977, the Education Committee formally agreed to the creation of the Network. The Member States were asked to appoint Heads of National Units, and each Member State set up its own Unit. Most of these Units were situated within ministries, where they were generally linked to ministerial information and documentary resource departments.

Four countries decided at the outset to set up not one but two Units, as follows: the Federal Republic of Germany, with one Unit to represent the Federal Ministry of Education and the other, all the *Länder*; Belgium, with Units to represent the French and Flemish Communities, respectively; the United Kingdom, given that the Scottish education system was legally separate from that of England and Wales; and France in which there was, at the time, an administrative distinction between responsibilities related to higher education and those concerned with the remainder of the education system.

The Central Unit was set up by the European Commission in Brussels in 1979. This Unit was administered by the European Cultural Foundation (7), under contract to the European Commission.

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(7) A non-governmental non-profit-making organization based in the Netherlands, which seeks to promote cultural cooperation in Europe.

Aside from general information on major political trends, the Network was expected to work primarily in the following areas of cooperation identified in the 1976 resolution:

- policies and measures to help young people in their transition from school to working life;
- the teaching of foreign languages;
- the education of the children of migrants;
- policies governing access to higher education.

Each Member State had room for manoeuvre in determining the categories of users able to access the services of the Network. However, five main categories were identified as follows:

- governments and national, regional or local administrative authorities;
- institutions and organizations formally linked or responsible to administrative authorities and governments;
- parliamentary bodies;
- institutions and organizations in the education sector;
- private and vocational entities and institutions.

The name **Eurydice** was chosen for the Network.

During 1978 and 1979, several meetings were held between the Heads of Unit to organize the Network, coordinate its development, consolidate relations with the Central Unit and decide on future needs. The Commission, for its part, organized a series of information seminars in cooperation with the Member States.

After a pilot period lasting one year in which procedures were initiated, tested and consolidated, the Network became fully operational. **Eurydice** was launched officially in September 1980.

Implementation of the action programme in the field of education was initially entrusted to the Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Education.

The initial stages of a documentary information network

Once operational, **Eurydice** gradually instituted different kinds of service:

- a question-and-answer system involving the Member States and Community institutions, on the education systems of the former and Community measures in the field of education;

The question-and-answer system

Each question put to the Network by a user was first of all examined by the National Unit in the enquirer's own country. The Unit checked that the enquirer was entitled to use the service provided by the Network and that the subject raised corresponded to areas within the latter's remit. The question was then sent to the Central Unit which, after confirming that it was appropriate, reformulated it if necessary to ensure that it would be readily understood by those to whom it was directed and arranged for its translation as required. Replies were communicated to the National Unit that had initiated it, with copies sent also to the Central Unit.

- proactive arrangements which used the Network to circulate documentary material on topics related to cooperation in education;
- a multilingual press review service for examining and classifying periodicals, dailies, speeches and press releases;
- a documentary database which was located at the Central Unit, and could be accessed by the Member States via their National Unit; this database gradually compiled an index of all replies to questions put to the Network by the National Units, and any official or related documents which might accompany them, as well as documents circulated within the Network by the Central Unit; some of this information was exploited on an ad hoc basis to produce concise overviews or analyses;
- the preparation of special briefings or notes for information used to service a variety of meetings, along with the production of statistical information on developments and trends in education systems; this statistical material was based on Eurostat publications and supplementary information supplied by the National Units;
- support to the Commission in managing the Eudised thesaurus which was initially developed by the Council of Europe and in the administration of which the Commission now cooperated (this Thesaurus was subsequently to be known as the *European Education Thesaurus*).

With the exception of the question-and-answer system, in which the National Units and Central Unit, which thenceforth became known as the European Unit, acted freely among themselves whenever appropriate, the other services were administered by the European Unit based in Brussels.

Regular meetings of Heads of Units were organized in Brussels or in the Member States.

Certain matters discussed at them resulted in publications which, in some cases, provided input into meetings of the Council of Ministers.

Communication of any information was via conventional postal services or fax. However, there soon arose the question of using more modern information resources and computerized databases compatible with national documentary information systems.

Meanwhile, developing areas of interest and increasingly intensive cooperation in education stepped up the amount of information to be processed. As a result, the Network was confronted with an increasing number of enquiries covering all questions related to educational policy and Community cooperation. The enlargement of the European Community, with Greece joining in 1981 and Spain and Portugal in 1986, also had a direct impact on the scale of the information with which the Network had to deal.

On average, around a hundred questions directed either at all Member States or just some of them were processed each year by the Network under the question-and-answer system. Thousands of items were indexed annually in the documentary information centre.

The development of cooperation (1)

The report on a **People's Europe**, adopted in **1985** by the Milan European Council, strengthened cooperation in education by emphasizing the responsibility of the Community for helping young people to prepare for the Europe of the future.

Recognition in the same year of higher education as an area subsumed under vocational training (the **Gravier Judgment** of **13 February 1985**) echoed this view by consolidating the legal basis for initiatives in the field of higher education. Article 128 of the Treaty of Rome provided for the introduction of a common vocational training policy which now extended de facto to higher education.

From the outset, cooperation with other partners got under way. The close association between educational and vocational training issues meant that **Cedefop** (the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training) became a privileged partner, as was reflected in the joint production in 1987 of the first version of the *Structures* publication (see 'Eurydice expertise: cooperation with other partners') entitled *The Education Structures in the Member States of the European Communities*, and the regular exchanges of information on terminological tools developed by both bodies. Other partners with which the **Eurydice** Network was in regular contact included the **OSCE** (the Statistical Office of the European Community, which was to become **Eurostat**), the **Council of Europe** (in which cooperation focused, in particular, on the Eudised thesaurus), **Unesco** (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), the **ILO** (the International Labour Organisation) and the **OECD** (the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development).

Experience of working with the question-and-answer system increasingly revealed the need for basic information on the structure of education systems if the full implications of the answers to questions were to be properly grasped. The National Units therefore turned to this task, while trying to follow an overall common pattern for setting out the main features of their education systems. As time went by and the National Units acquired the appropriate facilities, it became clear that computerization of all these descriptions of education systems would necessary.

The move towards indicators and comparative analysis

At the end of the 1980s, an impressive quantity of information was circulating throughout the Network, thereby contributing to the enrichment of cooperation in education within the European Community. The Network had a direct and fruitful bearing on the way in which cooperation was undertaken so that, as the latter matured, it generated fresh requirements. The problem was not now a shortage of information but the question of its transparency. Was simply making information available sufficient, in itself, to enhance policy-making? Was not the real objective to contribute to a more refined and thorough knowledge of what occurred in other countries? And where the aim was to identify developments that might be relevant to other contexts, should not information highlight the differences and similarities between systems? Arguably, the most important task was to discuss and account for actions in relation to the overall context in which they occurred. If information of this kind was lacking at European level, surely now was the time for it to be developed. As cooperation was consolidated still further, support for these views came to be expressed by a small but significant body of opinion both at national and Community levels.

The development of cooperation (2)

The **Single European Act** which came into effect on **1 July 1987** recognized the need to upgrade human resources if the big single European market was to become a reality. Education and training thus became issues to which the Community now devoted fresh priority attention.

Cooperation in education entered a new phase with the adoption between 1986 and 1990 of the **main Community programmes in education and training (Erasmus, Comett, Lingua, Petra, Force**, etc.).

In **October 1989**, the priorities for cooperation and Community policy in education were restated by the Council and ministers for education, in the run-up to the 1993 internal market. They were as follows:

- to develop a multicultural Europe rooted in respect for linguistic and cultural identity, in which the European dimension in education would nurture a sense of belonging to a European community;
- to improve the initial and continuing training of education staff to enhance the quality of basic education;
- to encourage the mobility of young people, teachers and students, etc.;
- to offer quality education and training to all for a Europe of skills;
- to develop a Europe open to the world.

On **7 February 1992**, the **Treaty on European Union was signed in Maastricht**. The Treaty, which came into effect on 1 November 1993, represented a historical turning point for Community action in the field of education. Its Article 126 formally recognized education as a legitimate area of Community responsibility in its own right.

On **5 May 1993**, the **Guidelines for Community Action in the field of Education and Training** were adopted by the Commission. They constituted the first document providing an overall appraisal of the future of Community cooperation in these two fields.

On **10** and **11 December 1993**, the Heads of State and Government decided to implement an action plan based on the ideas set out in the White Paper ***Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: the Challenges and Ways forward into the 21st Century*** presented by the Commission. It contained a chapter on the adaptation of education and vocational training systems.

Awareness as to the importance of these new requirements became steadily more widespread. The concerns of policy-makers at the highest level were shifting. National education systems became responsive to the concept of evaluation, and the need for indicators became increasingly apparent. Alive to these developments, several National Units, together with the European Unit, initiated publication by the Network of comparative studies.

The resolution of the Council and Ministers for Education on 6 December 1990 upheld this new approach and entrusted **Eurydice** with the task – in addition to its other responsibilities – of helping to make data more useful for comparative purposes by producing comparative analyses.

Resolution of the Council and Ministers for Education, meeting within the Council, of 6 December 1990, concerning the Eurydice Education Information Network in the European Community.
OJ C 329, 31.12.1990, p. 23–24 (extract)

'...

Development of the Eurydice Network should help to:

a) ...

b) *assist, in the second place, the drawing up of comparative analyses, reports and surveys on common priority topics determined inter alia in the Education Committee and at the regular meetings of senior officials;*

...'

As this activity was pursued, a new working methodology was developed.

In order that basic information in the national case-studies on education systems could be accessed more rapidly, a database to be known as *Eurybase*, was established to contain them. The strict specifications governing its structure helped to make information more readily comparable. They also made it easier to supply information and gradually lessened the work of the National Units, thanks to new computerized updating facilities.

The comparative studies prepared by the European Unit, working closely with the National Units, grew steadily. They covered, in particular, measures to combat school failure, pre-primary and primary education, the in-service training of teachers, the teaching of foreign languages and the organization of school time.

In 1993, at the request of the European Commission, the European Unit with the support of the National Units began preparation of the first edition of *Key data in education*. This was published in collaboration with Eurostat in 1995. For the first time, there was a range of indicators describing the situation of education systems, which combined quantitative data with qualitative information on how those systems were organized.

The new approach involving comparative analysis and the production of indicators was consolidated still further by entry to the Network of the six countries covered by the European Economic Area agreement (Austria, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway in 1994, and Liechtenstein in 1995), the first three of which rapidly became full members of the EU. For some of them, indeed, this kind of analysis was an integral part of national practice.

This move from a network for simply exchanging documentary information towards an approach based on the comparative analysis of systems was firmly supported by the European Commission and further fueled by the European Unit. Inevitably, it gave rise to a change in the kind of expertise contributing to Network resources. The European Unit itself developed to accommodate fresh skills. Several Member States consolidated their Units or decided on a new location for their National Unit within the ministry or bodies close to it. In all instances, every effort was made to secure those resources and facilities best suited to the new demands of cooperation within **Eurydice**. Other Units responded to the challenge without altering their initial location, by developing new working methods. In particular, they intensified their ad hoc cooperation with national colleagues responsible for policy issues dealt with in successive studies. For its part, the Commission increased its annual financial support to the Network to sustain the fresh emphasis as effectively as possible.

Extending activity to the pre-accession countries

On every occasion that EU cooperation has become broader, **Eurydice** too has expanded. The nine member countries of the European Union within the Network since its creation in 1980 were joined by:

- Greece in 1981;
- Spain and Portugal in 1986;
- Austria, Finland, Sweden, Iceland and Norway in 1994 and Liechtenstein in 1995, under the agreement on the European Economic Area.

In order to prepare for the entry of the pre-accession countries to the Socrates Programme from 1997 onwards, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Slovakia joined the Network in 1996. Next it was the turn of Cyprus, and then Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovenia in 1997. Malta and now Turkey are currently in the process of joining it.

Since 1996, therefore, the number of countries covered by **Eurydice** has grown substantially. This has given further impetus to the Network, while at the same time enriching its basic documentary information and comparative analyses. Some of this cooperation has thus assumed a very special significance in so far as it is concerned with preparing countries which, in general, have been unaccustomed to working so closely together, to become part of a single educational community.

Aside from the fact that its extension to new members is proving successful, enlargement of this kind has also represented an additional challenge for the Network. The amount of information to be analysed has grown. There is a natural obligation to perform to increasingly high standards in processing data, delivering findings from analyses and responding to a wide range of differing information requirements.

Eurydice continues to take advantage of the development of information production, management and distribution technologies to improve its internal functioning and make even more of its output. Methods of communication within the Network itself have become much more streamlined thanks to e-mail and the Internet. The **Eurydice** website, which has been in operation since 1997, has made it easier to update information and broadened access to it for the entire educational community.

Meanwhile, the Network has consolidated its working methodology. Further studies have been published concerned with the role of parents, school heads, and consultative councils in education systems, measures taken to assist young people without qualifications, and the structure and organization of secondary education. A qualitative step forward has been achieved in comparative analysis with publication of the first studies in the *Key topics in education* series. These recently produced books provide contextual analyses of ongoing policies which are set to fuel current debate on highly sensitive issues on the agenda of educational administrators, namely the funding of higher education and of schools. The first two volumes of this series have dealt, respectively, with financial support for students in higher education and the funding of schools.

This growing commitment to the comparative analysis of policies, the broadening of cooperation, the incorporation of the most recent information and communication technologies, and the growing importance of education within European policies, have all helped to ensure that **Eurydice** does indeed now represent the source of expertise discussed in the first chapter of this publication. This expertise is set to respond to the new challenges to which future cooperation in education is certain to give rise – cooperation which will be increasingly intensive and demanding while continuing to respect the distinctive features of each of the systems involved.

The development of cooperation (3)

In recent years, cooperation has become more intensive and also developed in quality, as reflected in the following numerous initiatives:

14 March 1995, adoption of the Socrates Programme which has sought to develop quality education and training within an open European area for education.

In October 1995, the European Parliament and Council decided to declare **1996 the European Year of Lifelong Learning** following a proposal from the Commission.

In **November 1995**, the Commission adopted its ***White Paper, Teaching and Learning: towards the learning society***, which sets out courses of action for responding more effectively to the challenges of education and training in the 21st century.

In **October 1996**, the Commission adopted the Green Paper, ***Education, training, research – the obstacles to transnational mobility***, which puts forward several kinds of initiative designed to eliminate administrative or legal, socio-economic, linguistic or practical barriers to mobility.

Signature on **2 October 1997** of the **Treaty of Amsterdam**, which amended the Treaty on European Union. The Treaty confirms that the Community shall contribute to the development of quality education, supporting and supplementing the action of the Member States while fully respecting their cultural and linguistic diversity (Article 149) as regards the content of teaching and the organization of education systems.

On **12 November 1997**, the Communication from the Commission ***Towards a Europe of Knowledge*** set out the future guidelines for Community initiatives in the field of education, training and youth, for the period 2000-2006. The main strategy involves constructing an open and dynamic European area for education, which will provide citizens with the essential facilities and resources required for them to permanently update their knowledge and develop their skills for the purpose of employment, while providing a context for the enrichment of European citizenship.

In **1997** also, the study group on education and training set up by the Commission published its report ***Accomplishing Europe through education and training***.

Source:
Central audiovisual library
European Commission.

On the **1 January 2000**, the Commission launched the **Socrates II Programme** which focuses firmly on lifelong education as a means of both enhancing active citizenship and the potential for professional integration.

23 and **24 March 2000**, the **Lisbon Summit** highlighted the essential contribution of education and training to the strategic readjustment of priorities in the European Union as it seeks to secure full employment and the development of a knowledge-based economy.

On **24 May 2000**, the Commission adopted the **eLearning Initiative** which extends for a further period the eEurope action plan in the field of education. The initiative is geared to adjusting European education and training systems to a knowledge-based economy and numeracy-based culture.

In the autumn of **2000**, the Commission adopted the ***Memorandum*** on Lifelong Learning (*).

(*) At the time this publication went to print, the *Memorandum* was scheduled for adoption by the Commission in October 2000.

EURYDICE

A Network with a human dimension

Commitment, exchange and drive

Working meeting of the Eurydice Network, Brussels, 19-20 June 2000.

Eurydice is above all a Network of men and women who for 20 years have been striving constantly to improve understanding of European education systems, and adjusting to the requirements of cooperation. The progress they have achieved has taught them how to work better together, notwithstanding normal and inevitable staff turnover both within the ministries and the European Unit. Special attention has been devoted to the transfer of experience and knowledge acquired in the course of this joint undertaking, as well as to the integration of newcomers. In this respect, the role of the Brussels-based European Unit, which stimulates the Network and coordinates its activity, is especially important and, together with the European Commission, the Unit provides the Network with the impetus it needs.

The National Units and European Unit meet twice a year. Chaired by the European Commission, these meetings report in particular on progress in the various ongoing studies, draw up the future work programme, and provide an opportunity to exchange examples of good practice in maximizing the impact of the activity carried out. One of these two meetings takes place in Brussels, while the other is generally held in one of the Network's member countries. As the number of Units has risen significantly with the arrival of the pre-accession countries, the organization of meetings with restricted working groups has gradually become necessary.

Outside these meetings, the Units remain in close contact thanks mainly to e-mail. There is no shortage of reasons for doing so. They include the exchange of bilateral information between some Units on specific points, the mailing of questionnaires by the European Unit to all the National Units, the gathering of comments on texts being prepared prior to publication, or the communication of information on a given topical subject, etc. While **Eurydice** makes certain that the data of concern to individual Units has been formally approved by them, it functions in a way totally removed from the bureaucracy that might be feared on the part of a Network so closely associated with official milieux at Community and National levels.

Units sometimes organize bilateral meetings among themselves on their own initiative. Thus a Head of Unit or staff delegation may visit another National Unit or the European Unit. These visits are always very constructive and profitable.

A variety of roles and responsibilities

Working meeting of the Eurydice Network, Brussels, 19-20 June 2000.

The special part played by the European Unit in such a network has been highlighted in one of the prefaces. The contributions of the National Units which round off this account are given in an annexe. They provide a glimpse of their daily work and describe the added value they derive from their cooperation in the Network. Some of them also refer to the difficulties they encounter given the demands arising from this kind of work, as well as the solutions adopted to respond to the challenge.

Most of the National Units which are now members of **Eurydice** are still located in the ministries responsible for education. Seven of them, which are exceptions, are an integral part of bodies closely associated with the latter, as follows: the Spanish Unit located within the *Centro de Investigación y Documentación Educativa* (CIDE); the Italian Unit which is attached to the *Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione per l'Innovazione e la Ricerca Educativa* (known, until 1999, as the *Biblioteca di Documentazione Pedagogica*, or BDP); the Finnish Unit situated within the *National Board of Education*; the London-based United Kingdom Unit within the *National Foundation for Educational Research* (NFER); the Czech Unit incorporated within the *Institute for Information on Education*; the Romanian Unit attached to the National Socrates Agency; and the Slovak Unit which is part of the Slovak Association for International Cooperation.

The 31 countries in the Network in the autumn of 2000 (7) are represented by 35 National Units, given that some countries have decided to set up more than one National Unit, in line with the administrative divisions of their education system (8). Belgium now has three Units representing its French Community, Flemish Community and German-speaking Community, respectively. Germany possesses one Unit representing its federal level, and another that of the *Länder*. The United Kingdom has one Unit covering England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and another for Scotland.

The role of the National Units is twofold. On the one hand, they contribute to the work of the Network (by helping to prepare questionnaires for analysis, gathering information at national level and formally approving analyses and texts prior to publication, etc.); on the other, they satisfy the information requirements appropriate to each ministry, the bodies close to it and those interests with which there is collaboration at national level. The personnel skills of the Units are thus varied and complementary, and their staff include education specialists, experts in information management and communications, and people able to speak several languages, etc.

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(7) It should be remembered that, at the time of going to print, discussions are in hand with a view to the inclusion in the Network of Malta and Turkey, both of which are in the process of becoming involved in the Socrates Programme.

(8) Readers should consult the paragraph entitled *Close interaction between National Units and a European Unit.*

Looking ahead

Eurydice can today look back on a very worthwhile first 20 years of activity. In constantly adjusting to the requirements of cooperation and sometimes anticipating them, it has steadily accumulated a body of sound wide-ranging basic knowledge on European education systems, well-tried methods constantly open to improvement, a common language, and a specific kind of expertise. What is the precise value of this achievement for future cooperation in education? What fresh needs are emerging and how is the Network getting ready to satisfy them?

Education as a very central concern

Source: European Pressphoto Agency.

In March 2000, the Lisbon Summit set the European Union a very ambitious aim: '... *to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion'* (*). To this end, education and training policies are summoned to play a leading part in ensuring that human resources can satisfy requirements. This shot in the arm for European policy from the heads of state and government has highlighted the all-important role of education and training in relation to employment, with a view to taking forward the developments initiated in Luxembourg and Cardiff. With it went the explicit formulation of the following concrete objectives:

- *a substantial annual increase in per capita investment in human resources;*
- *the number of 18 to 24 year olds with only lower-secondary level education who are not in further education and training should be halved by 2010;*
- *schools and training centres, all linked to the Internet, should be developed into multi-purpose local learning centres accessible to all, using the most appropriate methods to address a wide range of target groups; learning partnerships should be established between schools, training centres, firms and research facilities for their mutual benefit;*
- *a European framework should define the new basic skills to be provided through lifelong learning: IT skills, foreign languages, technological culture, entrepreneurship and social skills; a European diploma for basic IT skills, with decentralised certification procedures, should be established in order to promote digital literacy throughout the Union;*
- *define by the end of 2000, the means for fostering the mobility of students, teachers and training and research staff both through making the best use of existing Community programmes (Socrates, Leonardo, Youth), by removing obstacles and*

(*) Conclusions of the presidency, Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March 2000.

through greater transparency in the recognition of qualifications and periods of study and training; to take steps to remove obstacles to teachers' mobility by 2002 and to attract high-quality teachers;

- *a common European format should be developed for curricula vitae, to be used on a voluntary basis in order to facilitate mobility by helping the assessment of knowledge acquired, both by education and training establishments and by employers'*(10).

The European Council also asked the education Council '...*to undertake a general reflection on the concrete future objectives of education systems, focusing on common concerns and priorities while respecting national diversity, with a view to contributing to the Luxembourg and Cardiff processes and presenting a broader report to the European Council in the Spring of 2001'*(11). This report will, among other things, take stock of the progress achieved in implementing the fresh strategic objectives set by the Lisbon European Council. From this standpoint, it will aim to assess the extent to which the indicators and benchmarks established in Lisbon have been respected. It will also attempt to gauge the extent to which all these initiatives have led to progress in adapting education systems with a view to establishing a 'Europe of knowledge'.

In the spring of 2001, the Commission will also submit to the European Council what is to be an annual summary report on progress as measured by structural indicators on employment, innovations, economic reforms and social cohesion.

As part of the follow-up to Lisbon, education was the central consideration in three matters to which the Commission and the Member States were to devote immediate attention:

- the *e*Learning initiative, which complements the *e*Europe initiative launched by the President of the European Commission, will be based on four main actions: a drive to supply schools with multimedia computers; efforts to train European teachers in numerical techniques; the development of European educational services and software; and speeding up the formation of school and trainer networks.
- the Commission *Memorandum* on lifelong learning which argues in favour of an active form of citizenship in a Europe of knowledge and the implementation of a European strategy in this area (at the time of going to print, its adoption by the Commission was scheduled for mid-October 2000);
- the *European Report on Quality of School Education* which was presented for the first time to the Education Council in June 2000, as well as to the Conference of European Education Ministers in Bucharest. It recommends a set of 16 indicators, in the preparation of some of which the **Eurydice** European Unit was involved, and which were selected in close cooperation with a group of experts appointed by the Education Ministers of 26 European countries. Susceptible to change over time

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(10) Op cit.

(11) Op cit.

Source: European Pressphoto Agency.

in accordance with political priorities, the present indicators focus on the following:

- attainment (in mathematics, reading, science, foreign languages, learning to learn, information and communication technologies and civics);
- success and transition (dropout rates, completion of upper secondary education, participation in tertiary education);
- monitoring of education at school (parents' participation, evaluation and steering of school education);
- resources and structures (educational expenditure per student, education and training of teachers, participation in pre-primary education, number of students per computer).

The report was welcomed by the Education Ministers who asked the Commission to update it regularly and include new indicators in it to cover the field of lifelong learning.

A new framework for cooperation

The Rolling Agenda

Following a proposal from the Finnish presidency of the Council, the meeting of the Education Council on 26 November 1999 expressed its support for adopting new working methods in the field of education and vocational training. A rolling agenda now constitutes the ongoing structured basis needed for political discussion.
Three priority issues were identified at one and the same time:

- the role of education and training in employment policies;
- the quality of education and vocational training;
- mobility including the recognition of qualifications and periods of study.

The Education Council of 8 June 2000 added a further two priority issues to those of November 1999:

- the use of information and communication technologies in education and training;
- lifelong education and training.

These subjects are now included at regular intervals on the agenda of the Council so that they are considered by several presidencies in a cycle comprising a number of variable stages.

The new open method of coordination

The Lisbon European Council placed knowledge at the heart of a strategy aimed at ensuring that Europe corresponded to a competitive economy on the world stage.

The implementation of new strategic objectives implies general use of a new open method of coordination whose main stages are as follows:

- defining guidelines for the Union, along with precise timetables for achieving short-, medium- and long-term objectives fixed by the Member States;
- establishing quantitative and qualitative benchmarks as appropriate;
- translating these European guidelines into national and regional policies by establishing specific objectives that have to be attained;
- periodic monitoring and peer review so that all can derive benefit from whatever lessons have to be learnt.

The task now is to adapt the rolling agenda model to the new requirements and to fully incorporate in it the elements of the open method of coordination as advocated by the Lisbon European Council.

It is within this new framework for cooperation that the future activity of **Eurydice** will now be situated.

Education and culture

Socrates
Eurydice

A stronger consolidated remit

The second phase of the Socrates programme which came into effect on 1 January 2000 restated the overriding aims of **Eurydice**, namely the gathering and exchange of information on education systems and policies, the establishment of databases, the carrying out of comparative studies and the preparation of indicators. The scope of Network activity has even been strengthened as it now includes reliance, wherever necessary, on external experts.

The shift in emphasis of Network activity which has occurred since the Resolution of the Council and Ministers for Education meeting within the Council of 6 December 1990 has thus proved to be both well-judged and workable. The wealth of data and expertise accumulated over the years has demonstrated that it is capable of serving the daily needs of European cooperation. At the present time, it also represents a foundation for work that closely matches the needs to which the new framework for cooperation in education has given rise. The open method of coordination advocated by the Council since the Lisbon summit no doubt represents a qualitative leap forward in European cooperation. It certainly means that it is all the more important for data, basic tools, indicators and comparative analyses to be made available so that 'the facts about education', which will be increasingly analysed, measured and compared, are properly understood.

The glossaries, descriptions of the different education systems in database or monograph form and the contributions of the national units on particular facets of their systems, will facilitate the analysis and checking that have to be carried out to avoid oversimplification, incorrect interpretations and the mismatching of data.

The preparation of indicators which have been published since 1995 in partnership with Eurostat and regularly updated and enriched (12) is an unmistakable aspect of current trends in cooperation in education. Until now, this material has been closely associated with the emergence and full development of cooperation in its present form. In the future, it is set to provide perhaps even more direct input into the various reports and studies undergoing preparation in order to quantify and evaluate the progress that has been achieved. This more direct involvement will doubtless go hand in hand with further development of the final product and stronger cooperation with Eurostat. Still closer joint activity, over and above the preparation of indicators, is also to be expected with other partners (Cedefop, etc.), given the integrated approach which is becoming increasingly characteristic of European cooperation in education and training.

The approach based on *benchmarking*, adopted by the Lisbon Summit, relies on clearly identified quantitative and qualitative indicators and evaluation criteria. Essentially comparative, this fresh emphasis is likely to mean, above all, that significantly greater importance is attached to the results of the comparative analyses conducted by the Network with due regard for the diversity of education systems and their own particular aims. In continuing its comparative analyses, surveys and the contextual analyses published in *Key topics in education in Europe*, **Eurydice** will make every effort to achieve refinements and further clarification, in particular as regards the report on objectives which the Education Council will present to the Stockholm summit in March 2001.

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(12) *Key data on education in Europe.*

Fresh areas of activity will be explored in accordance with the issues confronting cooperation. The new working approach initiated by the Council and the identification of those topics which will always remain priority concerns, will boost the overall logic and consistency of the subjects selected for consideration, and ensure that the order of business on the political agenda more closely matches the timetable for further analyses. They will also make it easier for **Eurydice** to anticipate requirements, as it has always sought to do in the past.

With 20 years of information-gathering and rigorous analysis of education systems and their various components behind it, the Network is now more capable of planning the future focus of its medium- and long-term activity. The new framework for cooperation and, in particular, the priority issues which have been identified as a result, will boost this capacity still further. Special attention will continue to be paid to making the most of the entire output of **Eurydice** for the benefit of its users (through extensively circulating it by all means, including electronic facilities, the selective use of content to match requirements and its breakdown into simple summary overviews that are readily understood, etc.).

The short-term agenda

The preparation of the various reports referred to above means that **Eurydice** is involved in providing support to the European Commission in the fields concerned.

Other subjects are also on the agenda of the Commission and the Member States, including the *e*Learning initiative, the Commission ***Memorandum*** on lifelong learning, and 2001 which has been declared the European Year of Languages by the European Union and Council of Europe, in order to celebrate the linguistic diversity of Europe and promote the learning of languages. The Network is associated with them via the following set of specific undertakings:

- the publication (in January 2001) of a study entitled *The teaching of foreign languages at school in Europe*, the first study by the Network to cover the 15 EU countries, the three EFTA/EEA countries and the 11 pre-accession countries;
- the updating (in March 2001) of the survey *Lifelong Learning: the contribution of education systems in the Member States of the European Union*, published for the ministerial Conference held to launch the Socrates II, Leonardo da Vinci II and Youth programmes, in Lisbon on 17-18 March 2000;
- the production and publication (in April 2001) of a survey on public policies regarding information and communication technologies in education systems.
- the publication (in June 2001) of a series of indicators taken from the 1999/2000 edition of *Key topics in education in Europe*, on the position of information and communication technologies in education systems, curricula and teacher training.

Other studies are also under way within the Network. The two main ones are concerned with the challenges confronting the teaching profession and methods and procedures for evaluating schools.

Guided by the European Commission and working closely with the Member States, Eurydice remains set, as in the past, to respond to the challenges of European cooperation and develop in accordance with new requirements. As its Network of members work in close cooperation while remaining open to collaboration with other partners and new applicants seeking to join it, Eurydice will continue to inject ever greater transparency into the varied array of educational systems and policies in Europe. With its commitment to highlighting diversity no less than common trends, it will unfailingly continue to enlighten policy-making and public debate.

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Annex 1:
National Unit views of the Network

Austria

Austria has been participating in Eurydice since 1994 and, since then, has contributed to all its publications.

Our participation has not only provided us with up-to-date information on educational systems and policies in other European countries but at the same time has ensured that current and topical information on the Austrian educational system is available not only in German but also in English and French. We use these data not only in our international contacts but also in a number of ways for national purposes.

The publication, *Structures of the education, initial training and adult education systems* has been used in education seminars at university and teacher-training institutes. The publication *School heads* was presented by a representative of the Austrian Eurydice Unit and discussed by the participants in a seminar for future school heads in the Vienna City Hall. At a seminar in Graz, Styria, and in the Austrian Institute for Adult Education in Strobl, Salzburg (1), the work of Eurydice was presented by the Austrian Unit.

The Austrian Unit sees the distribution of Eurydice publications as one of its priorities. These publications are being sent to the Eurydice co-ordinators in the nine provinces, to the Units of the Education and Science Ministry in which the Austrian Unit is located, to university and teacher-training institutes, to education libraries, to employer and employee associations and other bodies. Furthermore the publications are presented at Socrates and ARION conferences. Participants in the study visits organized by ARION are briefed with information from Eurydice.

The library of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture also presents Eurydice products to a wide public.

The Austrian Eurydice Unit is regularly consulted by administrators, politicians, university lecturers, teachers and students on various topics in the field of international and national education. *Eurybase*, the CD-ROM and Eurydice publications help us to satisfy the public's demand for information rapidly and efficiently.

In recent years, the number of copies distributed has increased from 250 to 500 a year. We also make wide use of telephone, e-mail, regular mail and other communication channels.

The Austrian Unit responds to some thirty to forty questions a year from other Eurydice Units in Europe and about the same number from within Austria. Most of these questions can be dealt with by referring to our already existing store of information.

The homepage of our Ministry has a direct link to the Eurydice homepage which is accessible to everyone. Links have also been established with the Education Ministry's Intranet for civil servants as well as with the information platform <*schule.at*> for all Austrian teachers.

In the media, the most frequent references to Eurydice publications are in the newsletter *Bildung* of the Austrian press agency APA.

In the few years during which Austria has been part of the Eurydice Network, the Austrian Unit has become well known in the country's educational circles as a source of information about developments on the European education scene.

Elfriede Tajalli – Stefan Polzer
Eurydice Austrian Unit

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(1) See also example illustrating chapter *Action on behalf of many different policy-makers*, p. 17.

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Belgium – French Community

The Ministry of the French Community has always been extremely active in the work of the Eurydice Network. From the outset, the educational authorities have shown keen interest in laying the foundations for an effective network that would allow the various ministries of education in the European Union to cooperate and exchange information.

The first phase of cooperation was a very active one, since all the data and other information to which we had access had to be pooled. The question-and-answer system proved effective in mobilising the civil servants of the Ministry's pedagogical section. This led to a better understanding of the various educational systems and more particularly to a network of relationships between us and our colleagues in other countries. Several areas for potential joint effort were brought to light.

Now that the Network's activities have come within the Socrates programme, cooperation between the various country Units and the European Unit has greatly expanded, but the stakes are higher and the quality of our joint work must be beyond reproach.

The size of the task

The tasks assigned to the various Units have grown in importance. This is only natural, given the fact that Europe's educational policies are undergoing wide-ranging reform and development. Our systems must adapt to the 'knowledge society' which is rapidly coming to the fore in Europe. In this context, Eurydice is an indispensable tool, permitting member countries to analyse with ever more precision European educational realities. The work accomplished so far has provided refined tools of analysis and enhanced cooperation between country Units and between the various services of the Ministry. When there is a debate on a proposed reform, Eurydice's contributions are invariably cited; they serve as a model and are seen as the ultimate reference.

The stakes

It is vital to keep track of developments in European educational systems as closely as possible. More and more, decision makers need benchmarks and comparative elements when carrying out reforms in a constantly changing world. Thanks to the stock of knowledge built up by the Network, we can now receive – in real time – an overall picture of the situation in various educational areas. In this connection, the French Community particularly values the basic work done in preparing the national dossier, collecting data in collaboration with Eurostat, and preparing working papers for a Belgian presidency of the EU Council of Ministers. The role of university researchers in preparing these contributions is crucial. We have gone beyond mere description to incorporate an outside view, that of the research community. The different perspectives make for a more complete picture and permit a critical and nuanced analysis of today's realities.

For us in the French Community Unit, the Eurydice Network represents a commitment that is demanding but useful and highly stimulating. The workload is heavy and the constraints considerable, but the results of the studies undertaken often permit us to stake out the terrain for future reform. Eurydice studies are used by an ever wider public in the universities, in the *Hautes Écoles* and in government.

Eurydice Belgian/French Community Unit

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Belgium – Flemish Community

The Eurydice Network provides us with a fast and efficient means of obtaining reliable information about educational systems in Europe.

Eurydice publications are much appreciated by policy-makers and others concerned with education in the Flemish Community. This is seen, for example, in the favourable reviews in the prestigious periodical *Tijdschrift voor Onderwijsrecht & Onderwijsbeleid*.

The impact of the Flemish Eurydice national dossier in *Eurybase* can be judged from the fact that it is used as a text in a comparative education course offered by one of the Flemish higher education institutions. Reprints of chapter J *(Information and communication technology in the education systems in Europe)* of the Eurydice publication *Key data on education in Europe 1999/2000* are much sought after by policy-makers concerned with new technologies for the valuable comparative analyses contained therein. The *Key data* publication is also enclosed in preparatory papers when our Minister of Education participates in a council of Ministers of Education. The publication *Lifelong Learning*, describing initiatives undertaken in other European countries, has given policy-makers in Flanders new insights.

All officials in the Department of Education can consult *Eurybase* via the department's internal network. They often use the data base to obtain information about the educational systems of other countries. Cooperation with the European Eurydice Unit also gives us access to its experts who frequently offer penetrating comments.

In the Belgian context, Eurydice offers the opportunity to develop close contacts between the different communities. Describing the Flemish education system in a way that allows comparison with others can afford additional insight into our own system and reveal aspects that are not usually dealt with.

The Flemish Eurydice Unit is in a special situation because education was a federal matter in Belgium until 1988; even now some educational matters are federal. Gathering information on these matters is facilitated by frequent meetings, regular contacts and agreements with the French and German speaking Eurydice Units.

Our involvement with Eurydice has led to the creation of a network of experts, inside as well as outside the Department of Education, on specific educational matters.

Having the right information is the key to successful cooperation in the educational field. Eurydice provides the cement required to build the European house of education.

Eurydice Belgian/Flemish Community Unit

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Bulgaria

We Bulgarians have a tradition of cherishing learning and knowledge. Thus, the members of our staff feel that cooperation in the field of education, within the framework of the Eurydice family, can be considered as one of the most important investments in our European future.

Bulgaria is already a full participant in several EU educational programmes. Our membership in these programmes marks the beginning of Bulgaria's activities in European education and training activities and gives the country a unique chance to gain better understanding of common educational policies. Our country's involvement in Eurydice activities has further widened our horizons and also given us the opportunity to disseminate our national traditions and innovations.

It is an honour and challenge for the Bulgarian Eurydice Unit, as a member of the Network, to be entrusted with contributing to our country's educational policy and coordinating the presentation of Bulgaria's educational system to our EU partners. In our relations with other National Units, as well as with the European Unit, we place great emphasis on being a reliable partner.

Working within the Eurydice Network is a challenge. It requires the efforts of dedicated people who are skilled at operating in an increasingly sophisticated workplace and who are concerned with raising standards. It means equipping ourselves with new skills and overcoming difficulties. It entails promoting Eurydice activities and publications at national level, thus helping the educational community broaden its knowledge base. In preparing our national chapters for *Eurybase* we are continually seeking partners who share our vision, our commitment and our goals. And all this is only part of the challenge.

Four years into our partnership, Eurydice publications are much in demand as the country's prime source of reliable educational information. Publications like ***Key data on education in Europe*** have been of great help to the Bulgarian government. Examples include: a May 2000 debate in the Council of Ministers on the numerus clausus for students at Bulgarian universities; the drafting in August 2000 of the national report on ***Education Policies for Democratic Citizenship and Social Cohesion: Challenges and Strategies for Europe***. This report will be presented at the 20th Session of the Standing Conference of European Ministers of Education, 14-17 October 2000, Cracow, Poland.

In light of the above, the activities of the Bulgarian Eurydice Unit can be considered as promising. The efforts of our staff to meet the standards set by the Network require a number of practical measures designed to improve our work and hence provide the basis for a new approach to meeting the challenges of cooperation.

Finally, the Eurydice Bulgarian Unit would like to offer the whole Network its sincere thanks for the support and encouragement it has received. And we would like to congratulate our colleagues from the European Unit for the hard work and commitment they have shown over the past 20 years.

Eurydice Bulgarian Unit

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Cyprus

Whatever its drawbacks, the centralized nature of our educational system has facilitated our work as a National Unit, since the procedures to be followed are clear.

Our first task was to study the vast array of documents providing detailed information on the educational system of Cyprus. This survey gave us a broad knowledge of the system, especially its more subtle features and allowed us to help colleagues who needed to focus on specific aspects of the system.

When we could not locate the relevant information, or when there was need for clarification, the second task was to contact officials at various ministries and/or other experts on the subject. We asked them to provide written answers to specific questions or conducted personal interviews.

As a result of this approach, we came to realize, as Eurydice officers, the importance of careful preparation, precision in expression, and meeting deadlines. To put it simply, we greatly improved our skills in solving work-related problems. Another consequence was that many of our informants were exposed to new ideas and educational innovations in other countries. This helped them to gain new insight into some familiar issues and to rethink both processes and policies in the light of our European orientation.

Answering questionnaires, writing descriptions and editing documents for the European Eurydice Unit demanded accuracy and concision and helped improve our thinking and writing skills. We learned to function as a team in preparing the messages to be sent to our European Unit colleagues and strengthened our negotiating skills. This helped us to reach a common understanding of the issues, taking into account aspects of the system which did not fit neatly into existing conceptions. This flexibility proved invaluable in improving cooperation and efficiency.

Preparing documents for publication by the Network has enabled us to learn more about the educational systems of our 28 partners and to focus on those similarities and differences worth bringing to the attention of officials. When the opportunity arises, we also share examples of good practice or interesting innovation with colleagues responsible for teacher training.

An aspect of our work we feel worth noting is the informal exchange of information between Units. We have done our best to respond to requests for information from other Units, despite the added work load, because we know our partners in the Network will also share information with us, if and when the need arises. Thanks to this 'sideline Network', we have been able to reply to requests for specific information not found in Eurydice publications on such matters as the management of teachers' careers and teaching loads

To conclude, we feel that our involvement in the continuous and frank exchange of ideas and our harmonious cooperation with other members of the Network have enriched our knowledge as professionals and contributed to improvements in national educational provision.

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(¹) See also example illustrating chapter *Action on behalf of many different policy-makers*, p. 18.

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Czech Republic

With the political upheaval of 1989, not only educational experts but politicians, decision-makers, journalists and the larger public began to think in comparative terms about the elements of educational systems of the countries for which data were available. The comparisons, however, were somewhat too goal-oriented and specific. Participation in international meetings and conferences, personal contacts and specialized books had started filling the information gap step by step, but there was still no comprehensive source. It was clear that we needed to have complete, structured, reliable and comparable information of the same scope and depth for every country.

We began to learn what Eurydice was, apart from the Greek heroine, what it was composed of, and what its objectives were; we got to know some of its publications and became aware that a database on educational systems had been set up, although it was still beyond our reach. That is why we were so happy when the Socrates programme was opened to the Central and Eastern European countries, with the Czech Republic as one of the participants.

The first thing we came to appreciate was that Eurydice and European Commission documents were rapidly made available to us. But the Czech public's insufficient knowledge of foreign languages presented a major problem. That is why we started to translate the publications into Czech, sometimes several in a year, as soon as they were published by the Eurydice European Unit. Since 1996 we have translated twelve titles, starting with the information brochure and continuing with the description of educational systems and levels and other topics. In the course of our translations, we became familiar with the terminology used by the Eurydice Network and developed the equivalent terms in Czech.

When the publications appeared, the public was eager for the Czech data to be included. They were happy when we have been getting increasingly involved in comparative work, starting with *Organisation of school time* and continuing with *Key data on education - 1997* and *1999/2000*, glossaries etc. What proved difficult at the beginning soon became routine.

Another very important task has been to describe our national system. The first step is to analyse this system, following common guidelines, and to describe it in a way that foreigners can understand. For this, it is necessary to put oneself in the place of a foreigner so as to find the simplest way of making oneself intelligible.

The Czech public soon got the habit of using Eurydice findings, which became the frame of reference for discussions on educational questions and policy documents. The most striking examples are the Education Bill and the White Paper on Education prepared in 1999/2000. Teacher training faculties (education and philosophy faculties) have been using Eurydice publications as basic reference documents in graduate studies for the Master's degree (especially in seminars of comparative education), in doctoral studies (specialisation in comparative education) and in educational managers' studies.

The system of education is in a process of constant change. The decision-makers and policy formulators are keeping the information brokers on their toes. This is why the importance of Eurydice's work is continuing to grow.

EURYDICE's dream is to find an Orpheus
- who knows the education system perfectly,
- who follows all the changes in the system and in society,
- who has international experience and an international perspective,
- who knows foreign languages (English plus at least one other),
- who is able to provide substantial and fundamental information,
- who has time enough and is not overburdened with other duties,
- who is punctual, diligent, skilled, clever and reliable.

It is not necessary that he sings or plays the lyre

Eurydice Czech Unit (1)

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(1) See also example illustrating chapter *Making the most of Eurydice output*, p. 27.

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Denmark

Denmark has one of the smaller Units of the Eurydice Network in terms of staffing; it owes its strength to its good contacts with officials throughout the Ministry and its access to their expertise.

In addition to its Eurydice work, the Danish Unit produces publications and fact sheets about the country's educational system in foreign languages (mainly English). This task is greatly facilitated by Eurydice cooperation and the knowledge it provides of other European educational systems. One needs to know about other systems in order to describe one's own in a way that highlights what may be of interest to policy-makers in other countries. It is also important to know what is on the agenda in the European educational debate in order to decide what materials should be produced in the not too distant future. At the same time, these publications can be used to provide new information to colleagues in the Network. The two functions are mutually beneficial.

I find that great benefit can be derived from a network like Eurydice. Not only does it provide good information in both electronic and paper form, but the personal contacts acquired in such a network can be invaluable when, for example, an urgent inquiry from a policy-maker cannot be answered by referring to the Network's database or publications. Because of the excellent family-like relations in the Network, everyone is prepared to put other things aside for a moment to help you when you need urgent information. That is a very valuable thing, for the provision of information to policy-makers is always a matter of great urgency.

It is my experience that continuity of staff in a Unit is of great importance when it comes to gathering information, not only from experts within a Ministry but also from other parties active in the field of education. The secret is to develop good contacts with experts – make them feel that you and the Network can help them in their work. Then they will also be willing to help you when you need it. Continuity also means that the Unit itself will be able to do a lot of the basic work, calling on experts only to clarify questions, check analyses made in Brussels etc.

I feel that it is very important for a National Unit to be located in a Ministry of Education, for then – at least in Denmark – the Unit is sure to be aware of any projected reforms – from the smallest to the largest. It is then up to the Unit to decide which ones should be entered into *Eurybase* and other products of the Network. There is usually ample time to prepare the information so gathered, as most reforms do not come into effect right away.

I cannot cite any Danish reforms which have been based on materials published by the Network, but it is quite obvious, if you look at the European education systems prior to 1980 and today, that they have 'harmonized' voluntarily – by themselves – and that this is due, at least in part, to the cooperation and dissemination of information within our Network.

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Estonia

The experience of being involved in a network such as Eurydice has given us a unique opportunity to receive comparable information on other education systems and at the same time the chance to be compared with them.

Whenever we are faced with a crucial educational issue, relevant information can be obtained from the large variety of *Eurybase* and Eurydice publications. National summary sheets available on Internet provide up-to-date information about ongoing debates and reforms in the education systems of the various European countries.

It is an honour and a privilege to be a part of a network such as Eurydice. We are grateful for the enormous amount of work that has been put in over the last 20 years and, above all, for its efforts in making information available in publications and on the Internet. The interpersonal factor is of great value in this cooperation: whenever a question cannot be answered with the information at hand, we can submit it to the Network, and colleagues can be relied upon to share with us the solutions they have found useful in their countries.

Estonia has been part of the Network since 1997 and can still be considered as a young member, given the time span of Eurydice's operations. The Network has brought us great benefit in our years of membership. Thanks to *Eurybase*, detailed descriptions of education systems are available for the first time, not only in English but also in Estonian. Eurydice research papers and publications were used in preparing our recently completed National Development Plan.

The Estonian Eurydice Unit works closely with the administrative officers of the Ministry of Education. Each department within the Ministry has appointed a contact person for Eurydice as well as experts who examine materials for reliability and accuracy. We also cooperate closely with the National Observatory on issues in vocational education. This provided useful input in preparing the national chapters for the publication ***Structures of the education, initial training and adult education systems in Europe*** and the national dossier in *Eurybase*. We should also mention the role of the National Statistics Office, especially in preparing ***Key data on education***.

It can thus be said that the Eurydice Network has helped to enhance cooperation between institutions and also between individuals and thereby to improve and develop the education system in Estonia.

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Finland

All agree that Finnish participation in the Eurydice Network has considerably enhanced national expertise in and knowledge about other European educational systems. The Finnish educational authorities find Eurydice to be a useful tool in formulating national educational policy in that it brings to light relevant experience of other countries. For its part, Eurydice has internationalized Finnish thinking about educational policy, both within and outside government.

In addition to traditional contacts with other Nordic countries, Finland has, since the late 1980s, enormously increased its educational cooperation with other European countries. For instance, it joined Erasmus, the European Community programme in the field of higher education, in 1991. Finnish participation in Eurydice began in 1992 (1), within the framework of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). During the period before EU membership, Finland prepared for full participation by examining the organisational arrangements adopted by older Member States. Study visits were made to England, Scotland and Denmark.

As a direct result of Finnish participation in Eurydice, the country's decision-makers are increasingly drawing on the educational experience of other European countries and looking at the initiatives that have been taken. Frequently updated knowledge of international educational trends is now seen by policy-makers as an essential component in a national programme for assessment of the educational system. Eurydice now has a permanent role in helping the educational authorities to develop Finnish education.

The expertise of the Unit's personnel at the National Board of Education is frequently called upon to carry out various investigative tasks of an international as well as national nature. Through the Eurydice Network, the Finnish Unit has been able to provide policy-makers and citizens with wide-ranging sources of educational information and to assist them in their research. The Unit's ability to function as an interpreter of other educational systems is of great value to those whose international experience is more limited.

Use of the Network's output and activities has been made at national level on several occasions:

- The entire Finnish educational legislation was renewed in the late 1990s. To help the responsible authorities to complete their work, the Finnish Unit prepared a report to the Ministry of Education about the subject using the existing Eurydice documents as its basis.
- In September 1996 the Finnish Minister of Education asked for a European review about whether students taking the matriculation examination are eligible to see their original answer sheets after evaluation. The answers from other Eurydice units were received in a few days and already two weeks after that the Minister decided that a similar right would be introduced in Finland, as well.
- In August 1998 the Finnish National Board of Education launched an extensive two-year anticipatory project called 'Opepro' to investigate teachers' initial and continuing training needs. As a part of this project, the Finnish Unit sent a questionnaire to other Units in March 1999 to find out whether they had similar projects going on. The answers received from 23 countries were then analysed and published as a part of the Opepro project. There was a separate conference to promote the results of the report and, in addition to this, the Unit was able to introduce its own activities to several hundred people from various educational institutions and organisations.

The transparent and open nature of the Finnish education system has meant that there are no significant problems in obtaining the type of national information that the Eurydice Network needs. There are several hundred education experts working at the Ministry and the National Board of Education to whom the Unit can turn for its research.

The fact that educational administration is decentralized in Finland means that there is a variety of local approaches. As the key decision-making powers for determining the contents of pre-primary, primary and secondary education are in the hands of the municipalities, it is not always possible to give precise answers to international enquirers.

Eurydice Finnish Unit (2)

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(1) Official membership of Finland on 1st January 1995 has been preceded by preliminary works since 1992.
(2) See also example illustrating chapter *Making the most of Eurydice output*, p. 27.

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France

Europe would be inconceivable without education. The very existence of the Eurydice Network and the spectacular development of its activities bears witness to the interest of each Member State in the experience of its European neighbours in this field.

From the standpoint of the gradual integration of European peoples and the building of Europe, the activities of the Network demonstrate that a common culture and common concerns are emerging across the very wide range of different education systems inherited from the history of each country.

From the national angle, the most striking features of our own system are thrown into sharp relief when it is viewed alongside others, and this contrasted perspective has an increasingly marked impact on the way we analyse the former.

So much so, indeed, that today any attempt to give a comprehensive account of our own education system is incomplete without numerous references to the systems of neighbouring countries, covering their strong points but also the difficulties which they encounter and which are sometimes so similar to our own.

And while political decisions usually remain the result of primarily national factors, one can be certain that the increased circulation of information on education, in which the role of Eurydice is crucial, is contributing to the emergence of a 'European educational area' by constantly reminding our users (those who consult the Internet website and read our brochures) that they are part of a self-contained whole that is infinitely greater than the nation state.

Two very recent examples illustrate this development:

- the minister had to address the European Parliament. He wanted to obtain an account of the current situation as regards the teaching of modern languages in the European Union: this information was requested from the French Unit;
- a working group was set up by the ministry to consider procedures relating to the enrolment of pupils in particular schools: one of its members contacted the Unit to find out how this matter is dealt with in other countries .

As a result of working daily for Eurydice, re-reading the overviews prepared by the European Unit, and constantly receiving messages from throughout the Network, we steadily absorb this European awareness, sharing it with those around us, in particular when describing the French education system to visitors or foreign partners.

In general, the location of the Unit within the Ministry tends to facilitate the gathering of information requested by the Network for inclusion on the website or the preparation of documentary material.

All national and local 'policy-makers', most of whom are staff of the Ministry of Education, as well as schools are now able to access the Internet and, thus, the Eurydice website. This new and still-developing state of affairs has very markedly broadened the target audience of the Network within the Ministry and even beyond it.

Eurydice French Unit

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Germany – Bund

The Eurydice Education Information Network forms what one might call a 'European area of education information'. It links all the European Union Member States, all candidates for accession to the Union and the European Economic Area countries in a joint cooperation system with the objective of mutual information and understanding. This endeavour renders the national education systems more transparent, makes detailed information available within a short period of time, as well as highlights alternative approaches to solutions and examples of good practice.

For those who regularly work on or with Eurydice studies, Europe becomes more vivid and easier to experience. This is especially true for Unit staff, although the European context is also brought closer to the national experts in their national work through cooperation on the studies.

The different areas of competence of the German Federation and the *Länder* in the field of education give rise to a unique situation in the Eurydice Network in that there are two Units responsible for the overall Federal territory in Germany which are part of the information network. It is not always easy to assign the individual studies to the area of competence of the Federation or the *Länder*. For this reason, there is consultation between the two Units in order to provide Brussels with a coordinated contribution.

In practical terms, this work is made easier when either the Federation or the *Länder* side performs the preparatory work for the drafting of the study, depending on the main points of emphasis concerned in the relevant area of competence, and involves the other Unit before completion of the work. This means that actual duplication of work by the two Units can only be avoided through good cooperation based on mutual trust.

There are numerous examples of the useful contribution made by the studies prepared by the Eurydice Network for work at national level, with the working aids such as the glossary providing particularly valuable assistance.

Particularly worthy of mention in recent times is the study on student funding, which was completed at the same time as the work on reforming the *Bundesausbildungsförderungsgesetz* (Federal Education Support Law). The study aroused particular interest during this period as education support was also to include new international aspects and components.

Examples of the valuable contribution made by Eurydice studies can, however, also be found to an increasing extent in relation to educational policy cooperation within the European Union itself, with the stimulus and ideas for studies provided by the respective European Union presidencies playing a particularly important role.

Under the 'Rolling Agenda' system, priority issues are discussed jointly by the Education Council and Committee over several presidencies. The respective Presidencies have the possibility to initiate such a discussion, e.g. on education forecasts or the subject of 'lifelong learning', and prepare this with the help of Eurydice studies. The Network thus provides the necessary basis for a well-founded debate with brief, up-to-date, descriptive and analytical surveys. This clearly illustrates the growing importance of the role played by Euridyce with the substantial and direct benefit it provides for policy cooperation within the European Union. This role needs to be extended, because policy begins with information.

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Germany Länder

Advancing European integration makes the exchange of experience on the further development of education systems increasingly important. The German education system is essentially characterized by Germany's federal structure and thus by the different areas of competence assigned to the Federation and the *Länder*. Regarding the current debate at national and international level on quality assurance and the measuring of performance levels in schools and higher education institutions, the exchange of information at European level has become all the more important for Germany over the past few years, since the *Länder* have been seeking to define Germany's position in comparison to other education systems. On the other hand, the practical experience resulting from the federal structure of the German education system is of interest to those European countries with a centrally managed system or for those planning decentralisation. The prerequisite for presenting Germany in a European context is an overall description of the education systems in the 16 *Länder* and coordination between the Federation and *Länder* on matters of common concern relating to the exchange of information.

For this reason, two Units were designated back in 1977 to be responsible for German cooperation at European level, with an agreement reached on collaboration between the Units of the Federation and the *Länder*. The Documentation and Education Information Service of the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs was assigned the additional function of a Eurydice Information Unit, given that this service had already been preparing reports for international cooperation (Unesco, OECD, Council of Europe) on behalf of the *Länder* since 1957. Such contributions are prepared by compiling all the legal provisions relating to the education system, by consulting its special library focused on education history and education policy, as well as by coordinating contributions with the Federation and the *Länder* as national German reports. For the purposes of presentation to the European public, the German education system is initially described in terms that illustrate the common ground between the 16 *Länder*. However, for cooperation purposes in the Eurydice Network, the legal regulations of the individual *Länder* are also documented as examples, in order to elucidate the diversity of the educational programmes and specific features of the individual *Länder* within the framework of a common basic structure. A systematic comparison of the legal regulations for all the *Länder* is conducted, in particular, in relation to analyses and studies performed by the Network so as to coordinate the data for Germany as a whole and weight them in education policy terms within the European context. Where it is not merely a case of investigating the actual situation but, rather, one of devoting inquiries and studies to the future plans of the *Länder*, surveys are conducted among the relevant *Land* ministries.

The handling of two issues within the framework of the Eurydice Network has been of particular information value with regard to educational policy decisions at *Länder* level: the structure and content of teacher training and the duration of schooling up to acquiring admission to higher education. The survey on teacher training provided the background information required for an assessment of foreign teaching qualifications in terms of implementing Directive 89/48/EEC (*) in *Länder* laws for the teaching profession. The data on the numbers of lessons and compulsory subjects at secondary level in other European countries were relevant for the possible reduction of schooling from 13 to 12 years to attain the general higher education entrance qualification – an option that is now offered in several *Länder* or is the subject of school experiments – in order to shorten educational periods in Germany, which are in excess of the European average.

The *Länder* Unit also provides information on and the dissemination of printed and electronic products emerging from European cooperation, as well as the services offered by the Network for the relevant ministries and members of the profession interested in education policy at national and European level.

Eurydice German/Länder Unit

(*) Council Directive of 21 December 1988 on a general system for the recognition of higher-education diplomas awarded on completion of professional education and training of at least three years duration (89/48/EEC)

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Greece

Working for the Greek Eurydice Unit is an exceptional experience. People are stimulating, coordination by the European Eurydice Unit runs smoothly, and there is a high degree of cooperation with other Units. Eurydice publications, high technology tools (CD-ROM and *Eurybase*, Internet, e-mail), inquiries from all over Europe and contacts with the press all combine to make the Unit a fascinating crossroads of European educational exchange.

The idea of a network with units in the various European countries was an innovative one and offered us a comparative perspective on educational systems. What's more, we have the chance to develop a highly cooperative spirit, dealing with inquiries according to their educational importance, rather than on political, financial or geographical criteria.

Decision-makers have on several occasions referred to our Eurydice Unit for comparative data before proceeding with new measures or even wide-ranging reforms. To mention one example, the former Deputy Minister of Education, Mr. Anthopoulos, encouraged Members of Parliament to consult Eurydice in the drafting of education bills. We have also received enquiries from the Prime Minister's Office. Laws, books and other publications have drawn heavily on information from Eurydice. It is extremely rewarding to be made aware of the importance attached to our contribution to decision-making procedures and to our role in educational activities.

Being located in the Ministry of National Education, the Greek Eurydice Unit offers those of us working in it a breadth of knowledge of the Ministry's activities that would be hard to find elsewhere. Over a short period of time we are confronted with most of the major educational issues. The National Dossier is important in this respect. Moreover exposure to national data takes on a broader dimension as it appears in the context of comparison with other systems.

These comparative studies define, clarify and check equivalencies and highlight differences and similarities among educational systems. No other type of observation could bring out such a complete picture of the existing situation. In this context, Eurydice's *European glossary on education* and its *Key data* series are valuable tools that have facilitated wider understanding of our own and other European educational systems .

As the services of our Ministry are somewhat decentralized, data collection can be difficult. We usually solve this problem by setting earlier deadlines, following up on a regular basis and cultivating good relationships.

Our efforts focus on publicising the work of Eurydice as widely as possible and ensuring its utility to the greatest possible number of users including decision-makers, Ministers, Members of Parliament, the public services and research centres (7).

All of us working here feel that we are in a knowledge environment, that the doors of communication and co-operation are wide open and that it is up to us to make the best use of our opportunities. The Eurydice Network is a work of art that would be marred by the absence of any one of its 29 members.

Antigoni Faragoulitaki
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(7) See also example illustrating chapter *Making the most of Eurydice output*, p. 26.

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Hungary

The change of political regime has brought about a pressing need to modernize economic and social processes in Hungary. In conjunction with the fulfilment of tasks related to Euro-Atlantic integration, and utilising the resulting advantages and energies, this modernisation has initiated reforms in various sub-systems of the society. The reform of education has affected almost all levels and sectors of the system, including institutional structure, legislation, institutional management and maintenance as well as issues related to financing and content. As a motor for economic and social change, education has invariably constituted a major priority in the programmes of successive governments, although the approaches have varied or even, at times, contradicted each other. Implementation of the reforms was hindered by the fact that the old structures needed to be taken down as new mechanisms were put in place. In this situation, Hungary was given the opportunity to participate in the work of the Eurydice Network. The Hungarian Office was established within the framework of the Department of European Affairs and Bilateral Relations at the Ministry of Education. The Department holds the primary responsibility for coordinating tasks related to European integration. The Eurydice Unit is an integral part of the Department. Apart from its networking responsibilities, it is involved in policy development as well as the provision of information and the preparation of decisions related to European integration.

Participation in the Network has repeatedly proved to be of unparalleled benefit in our work. The volume of knowledge and information accumulated in Eurydice could never have been achieved by the efforts of a single country. Besides enabling us to become acquainted with systems and trends prevailing in other countries, cooperation holds up an international mirror to our own system. The opportunity to interpret certain functional elements of the system within a comparative framework brings an element of pragmatism to an area where preconceptions and ideologies still make themselves felt. This is extremely important for a system in transformation.

The contribution of Eurydice to the formation of national educational policies is illustrated by the following list of examples, which is far from being exhaustive. We regularly prepare professional support materials based on Eurydice documents for the official visits of senior officials to other countries, and for those of foreign delegations to Hungary. Thus, the Hungarian chapter of *Structures of the education, initial training and adult education systems* was included in the documentation prepared in English for the official visit of the Minister to the United States. The Irish chapters of a number of Eurydice publications have been used in the back-up material compiled for the official visit of senior Hungarian officials to Ireland. The basic documentation for the professional debate preceding the modification of the Ministerial Decree regulating the 2000/2001 school year included the publication *Organisation of school time*. The human resource development chapter of the *Preliminary National Development Plan* prepared for the PHARE 2000 Programme was partly based on data provided in *Key data on education in Europe - 1999/2000*.

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Iceland

Iceland has been participating in the work of Eurydice since 1st January 1994, following the 1993 Agreement on the European Economic Area. The Icelandic Eurydice Unit has, since its inception, been located in the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Cooperation within the Eurydice Network has had an impact on the work of the Ministry in several ways. The first important project was to write a chapter for the national dossier of *Eurybase* and one for *Structures of the education and initial training systems.* Both have been useful as a source of information and have been the inspiration for booklets on the Icelandic educational system. The national dossier in *Eurybase* is very valuable in meeting requests for information about Iceland's educational system. In recent years, Eurydice's website has become one of the most widely used sources of information on the educational systems of Iceland and other European countries.

Key data on education and Eurydice's statistical reports have been used as a model for other statistical publications in Iceland. A booklet on the Icelandic educational system has, for example, used figures from *Key data on education* for purposes of comparison. One of the strengths of Eurydice publications is the reliability of its information: readers can be assured that the data used have been verified and thoroughly checked. The collection of Icelandic data for Eurydice publications has sometimes been difficult as the information may not have been collected before. But after doing it for Eurydice, the Ministry has continued to collect the information and thereby enlarged the statistical base of the Icelandic educational system. An agreement between the Ministry and the Statistical Bureau regarding collection of data on the school system, takes into account Eurydice's needs for information. As a result, there is now relatively easy access to statistical information on the Icelandic educational system.

Reports on specific issues published by Eurydice have on occasion influenced public discussion in Iceland on, for example, the organisation of school time and the financing of higher education. People have used information from Eurydice publications to compare the situation in Iceland with that of other European countries, thus highlighting how well Iceland is doing and where we could – or should – be doing better.

As the Icelandic Eurydice Unit is situated within the Ministry, it is relatively easy to have information verified by the appropriate people. This process can take some time but, after six years of experience, people have realized the value and quality of Eurydice publications and are willing to give us their comments and information when needed.

In general it can be said that our work within the Eurydice Network has proved an invaluable guide to policy-makers in defining and selecting what statistical information to gather. It has also made available basic information in English about the educational system in Iceland. Furthermore it has drawn attention to the status, in various fields, of the Icelandic system in comparison with other countries.

Eurydice is a reliable source of information which we proudly introduce when asked for information about our system or other educational systems in Europe. We congratulate the Eurydice Network on its 20th anniversary.

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Ireland

The Irish Eurydice Unit is located in the International Section of the Department of Education and Science. This enables the Eurydice team to have an overview of developments taking place at EU level and to appreciate the overall strategic importance of Eurydice.

The Eurydice Network is key to gaining an appreciation of how the education systems in other countries work. The comparisons and information available feed in to decision-making and policy work at national level in Ireland. Information which might have been difficult to obtain due to language difficulties or quite simply just not knowing where to look has been made available in an easy-to-use, straightforward format. The possibility of obtaining speedy and accurate information through the Network is much appreciated at national level and the Eurydice studies are a useful research tool for many new initiatives at national level. In short, the work of the Eurydice Unit means that there is an awareness at national level of activities in other countries that there might not necessarily be otherwise and the ease with which information is available means that other education systems can be more readily investigated and that we can learn from their experience.

In Ireland, the publication of Eurydice statistics is the subject of regular press coverage and the existence of such reliable statistics has been of considerable assistance to education policy-makers in their work.

Day to day, the Eurydice Network is a resource for the Department of Education and Science allowing us to investigate at short notice what the situation is in other countries and to factor this in to the work of task forces and working groups looking at new policies for Irish education.

The development of information systems at national level to gather material for Eurydice has increased the flow of information throughout the Department and brought the European policy dimension onto the desks of civil servants who might not otherwise be in the way of encountering it. However, while the location of the Eurydice Unit in the International Section is undoubtedly useful from a policy perspective, as it ensures that those involved are fully aware of how Eurydice fits in to overall European policy, it does make our information and dissemination task that little bit more challenging as we must endeavour to ensure that all our colleagues are aware of the richness of the information available. We are constantly reviewing our strategies to spread information on Eurydice. The excellent Eurydice website is a useful tool in this regard and we already have plans to include a link to it in our Department's intranet site which is to be launched shortly.

Information supplied by the Network and studies has been used in a variety of diverse ways from providing a policy input to knowing what the international comparators are. The current Irish white paper, *Ready to Learn*, the White Paper on Early Childhood Education, was able to draw on the work done in the Eurydice study on *Pre-school Education in the European Union*. These synergies are frequent and there is no doubt that they contribute to making the education system at national level richer and to giving us a broader comprehension of what our European neighbours are doing.

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Italy

The Eurydice Network, with its increasingly diversified products, has made it possible for the Italian Eurydice Unit to meet the growing needs of Italian decision-makers for precise and up-to-date information in formulating national policies against a background of reform and innovation in other European educational systems. Equally important, the Unit's access to wide-ranging and reliable sources has enabled it to anticipate requests for information by offering documentation on the issues currently being debated on the Italian educational scene.

Using the resources provided by the Network, the Italian Unit has been able to produce in-depth analyses and comparative studies at European level on the topics most relevant to the Italian political and pedagogical debate in which an increasingly wide public participates. For a number of years now, the Unit has been producing a series of comparative publications, financed by the Ministry of Education, called *I Quaderni di Eurydice*. They focus on particularly significant aspects of European educational systems that are also relevant to the Italian system. This activity, together with that of the Network has highlighted issues which are common to all European educational systems and their development, although the solutions adopted to address these issues may be very different.

The Unit's twofold task – providing information on the Italian educational system and acting as intermediary between Eurydice sources and national users – has given the Unit the ability to bring into its daily activites some very important features of the Eurydice methodology: consistent use of reliable sources, the ability to select sources, and harmonized presentation of information and documentation vis-à-vis the different target users.

In its role of information provider, the Unit's greatest difficulty has been to find the right expert for each theme of investigation so that deadlines for the initial collection of information and its validation could be met. Efforts have been made to overcome this problem by creating a pool of experts, on the basis of indications provided by the relevant directorates of the *Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione* and the *Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica*.

In the drafting of reports and publications, the major difficulty has been the differing ways in which the Units treated a given topic, not only because of different national approaches to presentation but because the 'reality' is different from one educational system to another. Consequently, the most demanding task for the Italian Unit, in addition to providing accurate translations and organising the material (both that available locally and that requested from other Units) has been attempting to harmonize the content of descriptions relating to the various countries.

Positive feedback from Eurydice Network users, following the release of these publications, leads us to think that the Italian Eurydice Unit has been performing its task successfully.

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(*) See also example illustrating chapter *Action on behalf of many different policy-makers*, p. 17.

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Latvia

Latvia entered the Eurydice family in 1997 and a Unit has been settled within the Ministry of Education and Science. In three years of work, the Latvian educational system and its policy-makers have had the opportunity to access valuable information on many different types, levels and aspects of European education. It has also been possible to evaluate the Latvian educational system in terms of internationally comparable indicators. Latvia is still going through a period of economic reform, and its educational system too is undergoing changes and adapting to the demands of the global educational environment of which the country is now part. Latvian educational policy-makers, educationalists and the general public are now able to study various aspects of education in the countries of the European Union, as well as in pre-accession countries, using Eurydice publications in English, French, German and some translations into Latvian as well as the Eurydice web page on the Internet.

The still 'young' Latvian Unit has acquired invaluable experience in collaborating with Eurydice Units from all over Europe. It has obtained much important information and been able to examine examples of good practice in educational processes and policies. We have been happy to learn from other Eurydice Units, particularly the Spanish, Italian and British ones who shared with us their experience in organising Eurydice work in a setting where there was much to do, tasks had to be shared and priorities carefully set. Over the three years, we have improved our ability to gather the necessary information and to systematize, analyse, translate and disseminate it. The greatest gain from successful collaboration has been the jointly implemented studies on various educational topics and participation in the publications *Key data on education*, *Structures of the education, initial training and adult education systems* and *Teaching of foreign languages at school*.

Admittedly, collecting and producing high quality data and information has not been easy. The main problems the Eurydice Unit had to overcome were lack of experience in working with multiple international partners, shortage of time and human resources, gaps in data, differing methods of data collection and, in some cases, different interpretations of terms used in the European Union. Nevertheless, working for the Network has presented positive challenges both for the Unit and for other colleagues in the Ministry, and the mutual benefits are obvious. Summarising past experience and the outlook for the Unit's future, one of the main tasks still remains – to make the Eurydice Network accessible to as wide a public as possible.

We should like to thank everyone in the Network for their collaboration and we hope that Eurydice will grow and develop in the ever more challenging environment of the world's educational systems.

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Liechtenstein

The Principality of Liechtenstein, with its territory of 160 square kilometres and some 33,000 inhabitants, is the smallest Member Country of the European Economic Area (EEA). Since its accession in May 1995, Liechtenstein has been to take part in the Socrates education program and, in particular, in the Eurydice Education Information Network.

The Socrates programme is a huge success in Liechtenstein: in the field of education, and at every stage, it is now hard to find anyone who does not know about at least some of the opportunities offered by this programme. Socrates gives all those who are involved in the area of general education many opportunities to get to know the European dimension in education, whether through participation in a continuing education event for teachers, through the deployment of language assistants in schools, through cooperation with other schools in the EEA and the countries which are joining, or through another activity.

Eurydice, on the other hand, is not without certain obligations for Liechtenstein. Data has to be collected for the comparative studies which need to be produced, and that data is, in many cases, not available in the desired form. Some of the indicators or statistical values which are requested in the various studies simply are not available in Liechtenstein. For example, there are only estimates of the level of the social product, to name just one central macroeconomic variable which is often referred to in publications and is not calculated. In the area of education, the number of students is only known as an estimate; how many students receive a grant can be counted when required, but there are no statistics in this connection about the past and present situation. Finding out the data for the UOE (Unesco/OECD/Eurostat) statistics which form the basis for Eurydice's *Key Data on education* is a hugely costly process: most of the data has to be specially collected for this purpose. This takes time and personnel resources, both of which are difficult to come by. An outsider would ask how such a situation can be possible. In response to this we might point to the small size of the country, as was mentioned at the beginning. In Liechtenstein people know each other, they are aware of each other, and the situation is clearly understood. The society is still essentially a homogeneous one. Major differences such as rich versus poor, native residents versus foreign residents (by which we mean foreigners from a different cultural area, not citizens of neighbouring countries) cannot be identified in our country. Hence there is also no great need for statistics to display, clarify or even prove relationships. It is true that this is gradually changing, as a result of the rapidly increasing population and the pressure from outside to provide a certain minimum of statistics.

Hence although Eurydice is above all causing work for Liechtentstein, the benefit of this cooperation cannot be ignored. Liechtenstein is being gently pressurized into introducing internationally comparable statistics. As a member of the European Economic Area, the Council of Europe, the United Nations and other organisations, Liechtenstein has to meet their information requirements as well.

At the same time the information gathered by Eurydice on systems, reforms, results of education research and innovations in the field of education are increasingly consulted when it comes to dealing with questions of this kind in Liechtenstein. Today, therefore, as a new Civil Service Act is created for teaching personnel, it is useful to know about the employment conditions of this professional group throughout Europe, when a new curriculum is introduced from nursery school to upper secondary school it is useful to know about the allocation of classroom hours for pupils as a whole and in individual subjects, and the influence of modern information and communication technology on education, particularly when it comes to opinions on the necessary hardware and software. The reliable information reveals the diversity in Europe in a very impressive way and makes it easier to achieve better solutions in Liechtenstein.

Finally, Eurydice has put Liechtenstein in a prominent position on the map of the European educational landscape: on the one hand by including and naming it on an equal basis in all publications, and also through a more than adequate representation of our country in most descriptions than its size would merit. This provides documentation for the fact that Liechtentstein is its own country when it comes to educational matters. And that makes the obligations that have to be taken on well worthwhile!

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Lithuania

Eurydice activities in Lithuania started in March 1997 with the establishment of the Unit within the International Cooperation and European Integration Division of the Ministry of Education and Science. Policy-makers have welcomed Lithuania's membership because they see Eurydice as a source of up-to-date and multi-faceted literature on policies, structures, trends and reforms.

The main benefit of our involvement in the Eurydice Network has been learning to deal with Eurydice output in a structured way. The questionnaires, guidelines and other common frameworks we use when providing information on our educational systems, and the way in which Eurydice materials are organized, encourage this structured approach. Moreover, this discipline has carried over into other activities.

One very special characteristic of the Network is the fact that contact is possible not only with the Network's centre in Brussels but also directly with the other members. Such direct networking is indispensable when some very specific issue crops up, requiring urgent information at the national level. It is these contacts – sometimes very personal – that most enhance the value of our professional activities.

The difficulties encountered in our Eurydice activities have less to do with the way administrative responsibilities are shared within Lithuania than with the lack of human resources to carry out these responsibilities. Here again, a highly structured organisation of work is the only way to accomplish the tasks. It is essential to prioritise the tasks and to stagger the workload so as to meet deadlines.

One example of the use made of Eurydice output in Lithuania is Volume I of *Key topics on education in Europe*, prepared by the Network with the collaboration of experts in higher education reform and student finance. Another important issue dealt with by education policy-makers in the spring term of the academic year 1999/2000 was the financing of educational institutions. As a publication on this subject (Volume II of *Key topics* on financing of schools) was then under preparation in the EEU, our policy-makers had the opportunity to consult the questionnaire submitted to European Union and EFTA countries. Thus they were able to use the questionnaire as a methodological tool in dealing with this high-priority issue. Some of the countries' answers to this questionnaire were also used.

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Luxembourg

Luxembourg was among the EU countries which took part in setting up the Eurydice Network, and its Eurydice National Unit was involved from the outset in the Network's various projects.

Because the Luxembourg Unit has always been attached to a centralized educational and administrative system, it has been that much easier for it to research information and conduct documentary information activity related to the Luxembourg education system. Until August 1999, the Unit formed a department within the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, but it is now incorporated within the Ministry of Culture, Higher Education and Research following reconstitution of the government in 1999.

In the course of its 20-year existence, the Luxembourg Unit has constantly sought to perform satisfactorily those of its tasks related to the various requests for information that emanate either from the Eurydice Network or the different ministerial departments within Luxembourg.

On occasions, this has made it harder to pursue work involving research or the preparation of written material, or even to participate as a matter of course in the special working groups set up by the Eurydice European Unit.

However, the many achievements and considerable positive experience of the last 20 years spent working within the Network have more than compensated for any occasional difficulties.

As a result, the Luxembourg Unit has been fully associated with the development and different stages of the network's enlargement.

The exchange of information and experience with other National Units, as well as many contacts with the European Unit, have resulted in a broader view of changes occurring in national and European policies in education.

In this context, the Luxembourg Unit has been approached, in particular, during periods of major reform in the 1990s by all those responsible for educational policy-making in the country who have sought to obtain from it precise and reliable information on certain aspects of education in the various Member States of the European Union. The information provided has done much to enhance their understanding of methods and procedures governing the operation of other education systems.

For example, in 1994 and 1997, the Luxembourg Unit collaborated with senior staff at the Eurydice European Unit to organize a presentation of comparative analyses for the benefit of the Luxembourg Minister of Education and a specialist audience (*Measures to combat school failure* and *Key data in education*).

Besides making an active contribution, like other National Units, to the preparation of the various analytical and comparative studies of the Network, the Luxembourg Unit ensures that these publications are extensively distributed at national level (among political decision-makers and others actively involved in education), thus enabling this target group to become very familiar with the Eurydice Network and fully appreciate its activity.

In short, the Luxembourg Unit considers its 20 years of involvement in Eurydice to have been a tremendously rich and rewarding experience and current developments suggest that the Network's future is no less promising.

Raymond Harsch
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Malta

Malta is the youngest member of the family of countries forming the Eurydice Network. It was barely ten months ago, in January 2000, that the first foundation stones of Malta's participation in the Network were laid. As the youngest member, the Maltese Unit is still taking its first steps towards participating effectively in the Network's programme of work. It is now starting to contribute to the European dimension of information on education. From the beginning of this partnership, Ms Pepin, the Director of the Network, has given us every help and encouragement on our journey across the vast and changing landscape of European education.

Within this short time, the work of the Unit has already had an impact on the Education Division, the organisation responsible for state education in Malta. Officials within the Division have started looking at educational issues within the parameters of other European countries, as set forth in Eurydice publications. The work is also helping us to produce a better-defined picture of certain business processes such as financial flows in state education. In addition, the Division is changing the way information is collated to conform to Eurydice/Eurostat standards. An important lesson learnt from working within the Network is that a partnership has to be established with officials contributing to the work of the Unit. This partnership must be based on viewing the various facets of the local education system and preparing reports and studies in the perspective of Malta's forthcoming membership in the European Union.

Despite consistent initiatives to decentralize management responsibilities to schools, Maltese education is still to a limited extent marked by centralisation of management and administration. Reporting and monitoring procedures have, however, expanded in parallel to the successful initiatives aimed at decentralisation. This, together with the scale factor, has facilitated collation of information requested by Eurydice. On the other hand, Malta's small size means that officials must be multi-functional and tend to be overburdened by requests from various quarters for reports, over and above their normal management role. This situation, which is probably typical of small states, puts pressures on officials and makes it difficult for them to concentrate on one piece of work at a time or meet deadlines. To facilitate the work of contributors, the least that can be done would be to give them ample fore-warning so that they can finish on schedule.

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The Netherlands

As part of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, the Dutch Eurydice Unit has been part of the Eurydice Network since the beginning. During the past 20 years it has been able to make a contribution towards the provision of information on education systems in Europe. Above all, however, it has benefited from what Eurydice has to offer: access to high-quality information which is delivered quickly and efficiently. One aspect which has been very much appreciated is that over several years of cooperation in the Network, excellent contacts have also developed with colleagues in other Units.

The work of Eurydice is a much appreciated part of the Ministry of Education, both in terms of submitting questions to the Network and in terms of the products supplied by Eurydice. Sometimes this makes it possible to deal confidently with a question from a department, so that the best possible use can be made of the knowledge offered by our colleagues in other Units. On other occasions speed is required, due to the urgency involved in policy consultation here. On those occasions time is too short to send out questions, but in these cases it is possible to use the information on *Eurybase* and the links which are available there. The publications serve as clear, convenient reference works for our policy workers.

The Netherlands Eurydice Unit seeks to take the greatest possible care over its contribution to the Network's activities. This road is not always completely free of obstacles. First of all there was a problem at the Netherlands Eurydice Unit itself. The limited manpower available (in the case of the Netherlands, for many years now, the term 'womanpower' would be more accurate) has meant that it was not always possible to respond immediately on all fronts. Since the summer of 2000, however, two people have been working for the Netherlands Eurydice Unit. It has become clear that this level of staffing is the minimum required to achieve optimum participation in the Network.

Then there are the obstacles to finding sources of information. The current policy, which is focused on increasing autonomy and de-regulation, has caused a change in the way in which the Unit gathers information. While it was relatively easy in the past to get the correct information from the appropriate policy-making department or policy official, with the ever-increasing forms of autonomy, independence and de-regulation it is not so easy to approach or ascertain the source of information directly. Salary measures are determined on a decentralized basis, higher vocational education institutions are largely independent and municipalities determine significant parts of local education policy themselves: it is not always easy to come up with an unambiguous answer. It is inevitable that the answer to a question from the Network will sometimes be limited to a very broad approach. In this situation, solutions to this problem might be either to take more time on processing (because several bodies need to be approached) or to make do with a more general response (because the multiplicity of expressions on a decentralized level do not make it possible to obtain a clear overall picture). An attempt is made to come up with an answer which helps the questioner to make some progress.

The policy workers in the department are able to find out many answers to questions with an international component themselves. First of all there are the Eurydice publications, which serve as a useful source of information on educational systems or specific sub-topics. Then there is *Eurybase*. Ever since the Ministry's intranet was set up, the Unit has had a separate page on it. All personnel in the department can quickly go to *Eurybase* via a click on the intranet. The Eurydice page is currently undergoing radical changes. In the new structure it will be possible to link directly to the desired type of education (with further links to associated nationally and internationally relevant sites). There will also be the possibility of asking questions of the Dutch Eurydice Unit directly by e-mail.

It is necessary, however, to maintain good contacts with the policy departments and develop the Network within the various decentralized councils in the field of education. The aim is therefore not only to reinforce existing contacts, but above all to expand the Network within the department. There will also be some targeted work on increasing support for Eurydice within the department and becoming more involved in policy projects. This creates a need for fast, up-to-date information that is focused on current issues – and meeting these requirements is an area of attention for our Unit.

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Norway

Analysts all over the world seem to expect that education in general, and life-long learning in particular, will be the major driving force in future development. In this context, international systems of educational information will be crucial. Eurydice is and will continue to be a very important centre for international knowledge and a basis for international benchmarking.

What has been particularly important for us is that the Eurydice framework provides for systematic collection of educational information as distinct from various ad hoc arrangements.

For a small nation like Norway, with no formal membership status in the European Union, inclusion in the Eurydice Network is highly significant.

The Norwegian Unit is based in the Royal Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs. Since the Norwegian educational system has a decentralized structure, the collection of information for the Network can be quite demanding. When the Eurydice publications arrive, however, they are much appreciated both at ministry level and in the various other bodies dealing with educational issues.

In our recent work on financial arrangements for students in higher education, we made extensive use of Eurydice material. Such international information is essential both because we want to see how other countries are meeting challenges in this field and because Norwegian students seem ever keener to travel and to become international.

Given an opportunity like this to review our experience with Eurydice co-operation, we realize that we could be using the Network much more extensively than we have been doing. We will continue to give our support to its development.

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Poland, together with five other Central and Eastern European countries, joined the Eurydice Network in the first half of 1996. Since that time, having made a substantial contribution, we have achieved most of the goals formulated at the outset.

By providing comparable information, we have managed to create an up-to-date and accurate picture of the Polish educational system. Thanks to the promotional activities of our colleagues in other National Units, the main features of this system are becoming widely known in the other countries of the Network. Establishing and promoting a true image of Poland is particularly significant in the light of the country's pre-accession strategy.

By strengthening efforts aimed at promoting and disseminating information on European educational systems among our target user-groups, we have managed to make the Polish audience more aware of the diversity of educational systems, approaches applied and solutions adopted. This activity has been extremely important in the context of the comprehensive educational reforms now being implemented in Poland.

By familiarising Polish users with Eurydice publications which, as a rule, contain reliable descriptive information rather than judgements, we have been able to foster an attitude of tolerance and respect towards dissimilar educational approaches (eight comparative studies have been translated into Polish so far and widely distributed).

It must be stressed however that, in the course of our work, we have encountered a number of problems. Poland has experienced numerous reforms over the last few years, and this has made it problematic to describe the system at any one moment. We have tried to overcome this difficulty in two ways. First, when we were asked to contribute a full text (e.g. a dossier for *Eurybase* or a chapter for *Structures*) we described – where necessary – the same situation twice, i.e. in its pre-reform and post-reform setting. Second, when asked to provide a brief text or diagram, we stuck to the reference year of the publication in which this information was to appear. At the same time, we added a footnote, information about what was going to change. This approach, which we have followed wherever possible, helped us – we believe – to present an up-to-date, accurate picture of education in Poland.

In the time that has elapsed since we joined the Eurydice Network, other National Units have brought to our attention examples of good practice, and these have proven very useful in our daily work. One such practice is the establishment of a 'reference group', albeit an informal one, within the Ministry.

As to the promotion and dissemination of our 'products', we believe that the pro-active approach is the most valuable. We try to anticipate the needs of user-groups, offering them publications we think might be of use in their work. For instance, when a draft of a new bill on higher education is being prepared, we assist policy-makers responsible for this task by providing them with Eurydice comparative studies in this area.

In conclusion, I would like to stress the fact that the Polish education system has proved to be a very difficult case to describe, since it continued to change while the texts were being prepared and published. Therefore I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Polish experts who supported our Unit in preparing the materials. At the same time, we are grateful to the EEU staff for their patience and understanding. I hope that our experience of describing a system in constant change may be valuable to our colleagues from the Eurydice Network should their national education authorities ever take the crucial decision to restructure the whole system.

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(*) See also example illustrating chapter *Making the most of Eurydice output*, p. 26.

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The Eurydice Information Network strives to promote understanding of national education systems and policies, broaden horizons and offer a new, global vision of the process of education in different countries.

With a constant exchange of information, the extraordinary coordination of the European Unit of Eurydice with the Portuguese Unit has enabled the practice of 'Union citizenship', in this case via the acquisition of new and the consolidation of previously acquired information.

This knowledge is an important factor for promoting awareness of the problems encountered today, such as that of 'global citizenship', and for direct but clearer participation in the initiatives and projects of the Department into which the Portuguese Unit is integrated, the Ministry of Education and General Public Administration. It was with this in mind that a press conference was held this year, attended by the State Secretary for Education Administration and the Head of the Eurydice European Unit, during her visit to the Portuguese Unit. Other initiatives for the dissemination of information are in progress.

In terms of Organic Law, the Portuguese Unit of Eurydice belongs to the DAPP (*Departamento de Avaliação Prospectiva e Planeamento* – Assessment, Forecasting and Planning Department) and is included in the Centre for Resources, Publication and Dissemination.

The DAPP is a central department of the Ministry of Education supporting the drafting and assessment of education policy. It is endowed with administrative autonomy and is dedicated to the study, forward analysis and strategic planning of the education system. The inclusion of the Portuguese Unit in this department, which plays a central information role, is vital for realising the objectives to be developed by the Network. As the focus of data production and dissemination, the Portuguese Unit complements the capabilities of the DAPP, providing support at European level.

Increasingly, the information – with which we need to prepare different types of documents and respond to requests for information – relates to specific issues and/or particular aspects of the systems that cannot be answered using bibliographic or legislative sources (the greatest problem here is their inadequacy for addressing real situations).

Therefore, in order to obtain concrete and reliable information that reflects education practices, we must collect data from the departments, directorates general and institutes which have skills in the different subject areas and closely monitor events in the field. These obstacles have led the Portuguese Unit to request the appointment of representatives from those organisations for collaboration with the activities of the Network. This collaboration is translated into the provision of information relative to the specific skills of each organisation, validation of texts prepared and, possibly, participation in initiatives for the dissemination of documents prepared by the Portuguese Unit.

The experience with some representatives of Eurydice has been very profitable and the contributions which we receive extremely positive; in particular, we recognize the effort which this represents, principally in complying with deadlines, since it comes on top of all the other work that everyone does.

The products of Eurydice are distributed across a national spectrum of 250 addressees, amongst which priority is given to policy-makers (the Minister for Education and his team), the Assembly of the Republic, Central and Regional Departments of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education Institutes, amongst others.

All officials from the Ministry of Education have access to the Eurydice site on the Internet, which guarantees the dissemination of information from the Network by all those who are committed to education as one of the main political priorities.

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Romania

Over a long period of time, information on education circulated with difficulty between Romania and the rest of the world. The Eurydice Romanian Unit has been concerned with building a bridge over the information gap thus created and since 1996 has gradually become involved in various activities of the Eurydice Network.

The Eurydice Romanian Unit has provided information on the national education system, in the context of a comprehensive educational reform, covering such aspects as: curriculum, further education, distance learning, education research and infrastructure, management of education and international co-operation. The Unit has also been concerned with the dissemination of information on education in European countries. Thus policy-makers in the field of education and other decision-makers at the various levels of educational administration have been able to learn about the main educational issues in Europe. The information centres, established throughout the country, have received the main studies produced by the Network and play an important part in making information more accessible.

Involvement in the Network has placed a great responsibility on us for providing information, given the important role assigned to each Unit and the Europe-wide destination of the studies produced.

Our isolation during the communist period led to a lack of information on Romanian education or a misrepresentation of it. Participating in Network activities has helped to present an 'unprocessed' image of the Romanian education system, both to the Romanian people and to interested persons in other countries.

At the same time, our involvement in the Network has offered us the opportunity, using the framework established by the European Unit, to clearly define the main characteristics of the Romanian education system and to place it in the context of other European educational systems.

Information on national education systems provided by National Units, and collected and analysed at European level, has proved extremely efficient for making comparisons and observing trends. In countries facing a transitional period, this added value is becoming very important for policy-makers, especially those involved in educational reforms.

Working within the Eurydice Network and communicating with EU partners has helped us to acquire a better understanding of differences in attitudes and mentalities regarding work. During the communist period lack of respect for intellectual work and the limited opportunities for making decisions and assuming responsibility affected the behaviour of most people. Nowadays traces of these old ways of thinking persist.

The main difficulties in providing information for Eurydice studies stemmed from the desire to keep a monopoly on certain information, misunderstandings about responsibility for the information provided and a mentality of having to be paid for every piece of information provided, even if currently available.

In order to overcome these difficulties, the Eurydice Romanian Unit has tried to obtain information from several sources and to check its accuracy before sending it to the EEU.

Eurydice publications are appreciated as valuable sources of information by the main target groups. *Key data on education*, for example, was an important element in designing a new information system for educational management at pre-university level. Education commissions of the Romanian Parliament have requested information on specific topics like teacher workload and legislation on education for national minorities.

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Slovakia

Slovakia

In 1996, Eurydice opened its Network to countries from Central and Eastern Europe. The Slovak Republic joined in March 1996. The Slovak Eurydice Unit was established at the Socrates National Agency, which operates out of the Academic Association for International Cooperation as a non-governmental body. The collection of information on educational policy and educational institutions and of statistical data for Eurydice is carried out in close collaboration with experts from the Slovak Ministry of Education on the basis of background materials prepared by professional consultants.

One of the tasks undertaken by the Slovak Eurydice Unit has been the preparation of a national dossier for *Eurybase* which contains a detailed description of the educational system. The data provide a very useful source of information, not only for policy-makers but also for teachers, head teachers and inspectors. The problems encountered in describing the Slovak educational system stem primarily from discrepancies vis-à-vis the standard system. For example, according to ISCED 97 (11), Level 2 is included in lower secondary education whereas in Slovakia it is considered the second stage of primary education. The classification of higher professional education appears to be even more complicated. In this area of tertiary education, corresponding to ISCED 97 Level 5B, the Slovak authorities are examining the classification. The discrepancies have not yet been ironed out to the extent required by the relevant legislation.

Eurydice contributes to the quality and transparency of the educational system. It also promotes innovation in education through the exchange of information and experience and provides comparative analysis of common problems in educational policy. The educational community has welcomed the distribution of Eurydice publications and their translation into Slovakian, as language barriers still exist for middle-aged and older people.

The Eurydice Network is very important for Slovakia as one of the associated countries on the way to accession to the European Union. In 1990, the Slovak Republic embarked on a broad transformation of the entire education system. The first prerequisite for placing graduates in the enlarged European market is to ensure that educational systems in EU countries and associated countries are truly comparable. The information collected and accessible through Eurydice plays an indispensable role in this regard.

The process of opening up the centralized system began in 1990. New legislation was introduced to bring in private and church-affiliated establishments alongside the state-owned educational institutions. In 2000, the Concept of Development of Education in the Slovak Republic was elaborated in the Millennium project. A new Education Act, covering primary and secondary education, is also being prepared.

Concerning tertiary education (ISCED 5-6), in August 2000, the Cabinet accepted the Concept of the Further Development of Higher Education, prepared by a group of experts from higher education institutions and submitted by the Ministry of Education. A new Higher Education Act is being prepared and is to become effective in 2001.

Preparing such projects for educational reform requires a thorough knowledge of educational systems and good practice in EU countries. This is to be found in concentrated form in Eurydice products, and the expert commissions are making full use of them.

Eurydice Slovak Unit

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(11) ISCED = International Standard Classification for Education.

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Slovenija

Slovenia

With the emergence of the information-driven society, it is increasingly recognized that networking is perhaps one of humanity's greatest social inventions. International networking is enlarging the scope of working methods and could become a tool to end centuries of misunderstandings due to faulty judgement and bad decisions. As education is perhaps the most important vehicle for developing relationships among individuals, groups and peoples, the Eurydice Network bears a great responsibility and holds out high hopes.

Slovenia joined the Network at the first opportunity, in 1997, but Eurydice had been known to us even before. In the 1990s, its products helped us develop a new concept for our educational system, presented in the White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia (1996). The appropriateness of the White Paper's key strategic orientations was confirmed by Eurydice publications setting out the comparative advantages of various solutions adopted by European school systems. These publications helped us justify our approach which was later embodied in legislation. Among the provisions were: an increase in the duration of pre-university education, early language teaching, establishment of private pre-schools and schools, *matura* examinations, differentiated curricula and many others.

The experience of other countries shows that ill-judged solutions are more likely if the international dimension is neglected; even the best intended investments can fail if their consequences are not anticipated. For example, the Republic of Slovenia's National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis* by the End of 2000, approved by the government in November 1999, assessed two areas in which Slovenia was lagging behind other developed countries: the percentage of the population enrolled in post-secondary education and equality of women in employment. When our country's accession strategy in the field of human resources was drafted in August 2000, it was found that this assessment was based on data that were not internationally comparable; the figures were then checked against Eurydice indicators given in *Key data on education in Europe - 1999/2000* and corrected. Enrolment in post-secondary education is actually comparable with that of other European countries, and the unemployment rate for women with academic degrees is only slightly lower than that for their male colleagues. However, the comparison showed that the participation of adult learners in education is lower than in other European countries, indicating that Slovenia has yet to make its way into the society of lifelong learning. Additional investments should therefore be directed primarily into adult education.

Today, Slovenia's slogan for itself is: 'Slovenia of knowledge – a country with an array of open paths and broad opportunities to develop culture and acquire education'. This is the ultimate aim of our educational reform strategies, which are based on a partnership among teachers, parents, public services and international institutions. Successful cooperation and the exchange of experience, opinions and efficient systemic solutions, facilitated by the European Union with activities such as Eurydice, are an essential basis for making political decisions and an indispensable tool for improving educational systems.

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Spain

The experience of being involved in a network such as Eurydice has proved to be very enriching. We have learned much from working in a network where all decisions are taken jointly, and it has given us invaluable support, especially in the late 1980s when Spain joined the European Union and the Spanish Unit was established. Working together, we have developed a culture of collaboration and consensus which has also benefited the Centre for Educational Research and Documentation (CIDE) where the Unit is located. Knowing about other educational systems as well as new trends in education in other European countries is, undoubtedly, extremely valuable when it comes to advising our authorities on educational matters. At the same time, this knowledge has had repercussions on our educational system by making it more open to Europe.

At present the Spanish Education Ministry is undergoing a process of adaptation to a more decentralized educational system in which the Autonomous Communities exercise more authority. The Spanish Unit must seek new ways of gathering information and of being in touch with the corresponding educational administrations. The experience of being part of a network has helped us to establish stable and smoothly functioning links with them. We have also benefited from the experience of other Units with similar characteristics such as the German *Länder* Unit.

Partly because of our efforts to translate most Eurydice documents into Spanish, Latin American countries are drawing on the experience of the Network to establish their own educational network – *Quipu*. The Spanish Unit is providing advice and support in every aspect of this work. Being part of Eurydice, therefore, has had a multiplier effect: it has helped us both in our internal network with the Autonomous Communities and in our international links with the Latin American countries to whom we are so close.

The Spanish Education Ministry has made use of the Network's output and activities on several occasions. Perhaps one of the most relevant examples was a comparative analysis, made in 1998 by CIDE, at the request of the Ministry, for the *Report on the Teaching of Humanities in Secondary Education*. This issue is currently the focus of much debate in Spanish society, and the upshot could well be a reform of the minimum core curriculum at this level. The Spanish Unit asked the Network for information on this subject, and the final product was a very detailed report on the role of the humanities in the educational systems of the other Member States. Other examples of cooperation could be mentioned: the reports *University entrance requirements* and *The financing of textbooks*, for example.

Eurydice Spanish Unit (17)

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(17) See also example illustrating chapter *Making the most of Eurydice output*, p. 26.

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Sweden

Over the last few years, the process of internationalisation has led Sweden to take greater interest in how other countries are tackling the problems that we are faced with, especially in areas where reform is underway. In this context, Eurydice is an important tool for gaining a broader international perspective. When a reform is planned or an issue being discussed, knowing whether other countries face the same problem, and how they are trying to solve it, can be an important input into policy-making.

Depending on the type of issue, much information is to be found in *Eurybase* and existing publications. Especially the all-embracing yet detailed information to be found in *Key data on education in Europe* has been very useful. Other documents that have been appreciated are the ones describing an education level, such as the document on secondary education. However, the possibility of making full use of the Network and sending questions directly to other Units is perhaps one of the most appreciated services. This is especially important for committees which work with legislative reforms.

The Swedish education system is highly decentralized. Higher education institutions, municipalities and even schools are given a great deal of freedom in organising education. This has direct implications for the work of the Swedish Eurydice Unit. We try to respond to the questions that are addressed to us through the Network. Many questions are difficult to answer as a decentralized structure implies different solutions in different parts of the country. However, it is always possible to give information on the legal and organisational framework.

One important aspect of all Swedish international work in education is avoiding duplication in the different arenas. Responsibility for co-ordinating links with the different organisations rests with a single division, the International Secretariat of the Ministry of Education and Science. This makes it easier to discuss issues addressed in the different organisations, such as Nordic co-operation, the EU, the Council of Europe, OECD and Unesco. This arrangement facilitates discussion on common issues and co-ordination between the different organisations. It is also important for us working within Eurydice to be close to the Swedish representatives in the Socrates and Education committees so that we can discuss common issues.

The Swedish Eurydice Unit works closely with the administrative officers in the Ministry. Each division within the ministry has appointed a contact person for Eurydice who helps us to verify all our contributions to publications and to *Eurybase* so as to ensure reliability. These are the people we contact when we want to disseminate Eurydice information. This may take the form of regular publications but may also include fact sheets on these publications in Swedish and other information on European education systems or issues of special interest to Swedish policy-makers.

Eurydice Swedish Unit (15)

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(15) See also example illustrating chapter *Making the most of Eurydice output*, p. 26.

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The Eurydice Unit for England, Wales and Northern Ireland is based at the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), Britain's leading independent educational research body. Our mission is to contribute to the quality of education policy-making and improve the transparency and understanding of European and international education by collecting, managing and disseminating information on education policies.

We feel very privileged to be part of this unique Network – the personal contact with colleagues in other countries is essential to our work and is greatly valued by all members of the team. The Unit maintains close contacts with the Eurydice Unit in Scotland and other Socrates national agencies in the UK. Recently, we have been closely involved in the UK launch of the new phase of the Socrates programme and have participated in a series of information seminars to promote this programme.

With *Eurybase* and Network studies providing the backbone of our publications work, a customised enquiry service is the main basis for our service to policy-makers in the UK. The ability to seek additional information from our colleagues in the Network to support this service is invaluable. Analysis of the subjects of enquiries in recent years shows that the Unit has provided a significant input into many of the major areas of policy reform. Recent examples include teachers' pay and conditions of service and student financial arrangements. The Unit also provided information for the Dearing Report *The National Curriculum and its Assessment* (1994).

Members of our own Eurydice team research and provide information for Network publications, seeking additional material as necessary from our contacts within the education ministries and other government agencies. We also rely on ministry colleagues for the validation of texts. Following devolution, many legislative responsibilities for education have been assumed by the Northern Ireland Assembly and the National Assembly for Wales. The challenge facing the Unit in the next few years is to further develop and maintain close links with these devolved administrations.

We have a proactive approach to information management, regularly scanning government websites and publications in order to keep abreast of new initiatives and reforms. Relevant material is catalogued and filed. We are currently in the process of developing a new database of information, which will improve our storage and retrieval of material.

The Unit has always been keen to encourage innovative ways to respond to the information needs of policy-makers. For example, short descriptions of education systems prepared for ministerial visits abroad lead to the development of the overviews now provided on a network basis. Latest developments in the Unit include the production of a series of *Factsheets*, which are intended to provide quick responses to routine enquiries, and *Education in the News: Europe*, a regular current awareness bulletin which highlights topical education news items in Network countries.

The NFER has provided the Eurydice service in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since the establishment of the Network in 1980. We look forward to the challenges and opportunities facing us during this new, exciting phase of European education cooperation.

Eurydice Unit for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (44)

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(44) See also example illustrating chapter *Action on behalf of many different policy-makers*, p. 18.

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United Kingdom – Scotland

The Scottish Executive welcomes the opportunity to be represented in the Eurydice Network. This has many benefits. In the first place, it provides access to high quality comparative information on education in Europe. It also offers the opportunity to learn about current developments in other systems. It provides access to a network in which a wealth of detailed information can be obtained. Finally it is a forum in which Scottish education can be discussed in detail.

In all areas of life, we benefit from contact with other traditions and systems. This is no less true of education. Scotland, like other European countries, can now look at the future of education policy from a dual perspective. On the one hand, we recognize that our educational system is distinct, that it has its own background and traditions and that it must identify and address the needs of young people in Scotland. Yet, at the same time, we have an increasing amount in common with other modern industrial democracies, we face many of the same issues, are affected by the same trends and, therefore, can compare national initiatives and learn from them. For this, the Eurydice Network is ideally suited to identifying common themes and highlighting distinct policy and practice.

The Scottish Eurydice Unit is located within the Education Department of the Scottish Executive and has access to officials who are responsible for the development of policy on education and training and to Her Majesty's Inspectorate. The Scottish Unit is grateful to these colleagues for their support and assistance and welcomes the opportunity to reciprocate by providing information on other systems of education when required. For such enquiries we recognize that the Eurydice Network is again uniquely suited to assist.

In the past year there have been a number of requests from the Scottish Executive for information but, in two instances in particular, the Scottish Unit was able to provide Eurydice information that was especially appropriate. In July 1999, the Scottish Executive set up the Independent Committee of Enquiry into Student Finance. The officials attached to the committee were required to prepare a range of background papers at short notice. This included describing the situation and current developments in other European countries. The Eurydice Network had recently produced *Key topics in education: Financial support for students in higher education in Europe*, and this addressed many of their needs. Similarly, in September 1999, the Executive set up an Independent Committee of Inquiry into Professional Conditions of Service for Teachers. Again the officials concerned had to prepare background information for the committee members and in this case *Key data on education in Europe* proved to be a very useful source of information.

We seek, therefore, to continue to participate fully in the Network and to contribute to the provision of reliable, high quality material, describing and explaining the education and training systems and policies of Europe. We also welcome the opportunity of having access to the rich resources of the Eurydice Network on behalf of the Scottish Executive. We recognize that this is to our advantage.

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Annex 2:
Eurydice publications

In its 20 years of activity, Eurydice has published over 60 books, studies and reports. While the earliest of them are no longer in stock, a list of more recent publications still available is given below with an indication, under each title, of the language versions in which it exists in printed paper and/or electronic form.

Key data on education in Europe

Key data on education in Europe – 1999/2000 edition
2000, 290 pp. Available in DE, EN, FR (EL, ES, IT, PO, PT in 2001).

- **Information and communication technology in the education systems in Europe**
  Extract of the report: *Key data on education in Europe* (1999/2000 edition)
  2000, 24 pp. Available in EN, FR.

Key data on education in the European Union – 1997 edition
1998, 206 pp. Available in CS, DE, EL, EN, ES, FR, HU, IT, LT, PT.

Key data on education in the European Union – 1995 edition
1996, 190 pp. Available in DA, DE, EL, EN, ES, FI, FR, IT, NL, PT, SV.

Key data on education in the European Union – 1994 edition
1995, 110 pp. Available in DA, DE, EL, EN, ES, FR, IT, NL, PT.

Key topics in education in Europe

Key topics in education – Volume 2 – Methods of awarding and managing resources for schools
2000, 380 pp. Available in DE, EN, FR.

- **Profile of ... Key topics in education – Volume 2**
  2000, 24 pp. Available in DE, EN, FR.

Key topics in education – Volume 1 – Financial support for students in higher education in Europe. Trends and debates.
1999, 255 pp. Available in DE, EL, EN, ES, FR, IT PO, PT.

- **Profile of ... Key Topics in Education – Volume 1**
  1999, 24 pp. Available in DE, EN, FR.

Eurydice Surveys

Lifelong Learning: the contribution of education systems in the Member States of the European Union
2000, 164 pp. Available in DE, EN, FR, PT, SI.

Forward planning in education in the Member States of the European Union
1999, 76 pp. Available in CS, DE, EN, FR, IT.

Eurydice Studies

Teaching of foreign languages at schools in Europe
2001. Available in EN, FR.

Two decades of reform in higher education in Europe: 1980 onwards
2000, 194 pp. Available in EN, FR (A CD-Rom includes the study and the national descriptions).

Measures taken in the Member States of the European Union to assist young people who have left the education system without qualifications
1997, 89 pp. Available in CS, DE, EN, ES, FR, HU, LT, RO, SK.

Secondary education in the European Union: structures, organisation and administration
1997, 148 pp. Available in CS, DE, EL, EN, ES, FR, HU, IT, PO, PT, RO, SK, SV.

A decade of reforms at compulsory education level in Europe (1984-1994)
1997, 316 pp. Available in DE, EL, EN, ES, FR, HU, IT, PO, PT, RO.

Organisation of school time in the European Union (Second edition)
1997, 20 pp. Available in DE, EN, FR, RO.

The role of parents in the education systems of the European Union
1997, 124 pp. Available in CS, DE, EN, ES, FR, IT, PO, RO, SK, SV.

School heads in the European Union
1996, 96 pp. Available in CS, DE, EN, ES, FR, IT, PO, RO, SK.

Consultative councils and other forms of social participation in education in the European Union
1996, 92 pp. Available in CS, DE, EN, ES, FR, HU, IT, PO, RO, SK, SV.

Supplement to the study on Pre-school and primary education in the European Union
The situation in Austria, Finland and Sweden and in the EFTA/EEA countries
1996, 64 pp. Available in CS, DE, EL, EN, FR, HU, PO, SV.

Organisation of school time in the European Union
1996, 44 pp. Available in DE, EN, FI, FR.

In-service training of teachers
1995, 204 pp. Available in BU, CS, DE, EL, EN, FR, HU, RO, SK.

Pre-school education: Current thinking and provision
1995, 160 pp. (Study No 6). Available in DE, EN, FR, PT, RO.

Pre-school and primary education in the European Union
1994, 120 pp. Available in CS, DE, EL, EN, ES, FR, HU, IT, NL, PO, PT, SV.

Ready Reference

European glossary on education – Educational institutions – Volume 2
2000, 200 pp. Available in DE, EN, FR.

Private education in the European Union
2000. Available in EN, FR, only in electronic form (http://www.eurydice.org).

Structures of education, initial training and adult education systems in Europe
2000, third edition. Available in EN and in the national languages, only in electronic form (http://www.eurydice.org).

Summary sheets on education systems in Europe
2000. Available in EN and only in electronic form (http://www.eurydice.org).

European glossary on education – Examinations, qualifications and titles – Volume 1
1999, 224 pp. Available in DE, EN, ES, FR, IT.

Structures of the education and initial training systems in the European Union (Second edition)
1995, 458 pp. Available in CS, DE, EL, EN, ES, FR, IT, LV, PO, RO, SI, SK.

- **Supplement to the study on the Structures of the education and initial training systems in the European Union. The situation in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia**
  1997, 144 pp. Available in CS, EN, FR, SK.
- **Supplement to the study on the Structures of the education and initial training systems in the European Union. The situation in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovenia and Cyprus**
  1999, 144 pp. Available in CS, EN, SK.

Eurydice Focus

The position of foreign languages in European education systems (1999/2000)
2000, 44 pp. Available in DE, EN, FR.

Organization of higher education structures in Europe (1998/99)
1999, 44 pp. Available in DE, EN, FR.

Thematic bibliographies

Lifelong Learning
2000, 44 pp. Available in EN, FR.

Financing education
1999, 34 pp. Available in EN, FR.

The European dimension in education
1996, 32 pp. Available in EN, FR, HU.

Teacher training
1995, 24 pp. Available in EN, FR, SI.

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